



Islamabad POST

Saturday, March 29, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Putin calls to remove Zelensky floats idea of UN-led government

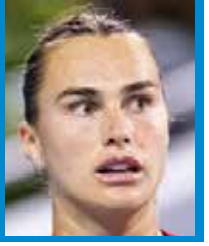
Detailed News On Page-08

'Islamophobic' tattoo, Hegseth under fire

Detailed News On Page-08

Sabalenka to face Pegula in Miami final

Detailed News On Page-06



Digital media to curb misinfo

Top civil-military brass agrees to crush terrorists

National narrative to be reinforced, digital media to counter misinformation, say sources

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has decided to counter extremist narratives comprehensively, reinforcing the national stance against terrorism, sources said. The meeting, held here at the Prime Minister's House on Friday, was attended by civil and military leadership, along with representatives from all four provinces, Azad Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan. Officials resolved to expose the perpetrators of the Jaffar Express attack and aggressively counter anti-state campaigns on traditional and digital media. It was agreed that the National Action Plan (NAP) would be used to strengthen the national narrative, with authorities directed to develop an active and effective counter-narrative against terrorism and extremism. The huddle also decided to prevent any content threatening national security and harmony while ensuring better coordination among provinces. To engage the youth, films and dramas will incorporate national themes to effectively counter extremist propaganda. Furthermore, digital media will be used to disseminate pro-state content and tackle misinformation, including deep-fake content, with verified information.

Continued on Page 06

Hostile agencies involved in Baluchistan train attack

Zahoor Buledi said that we will defeat terrorists with full force as they have nothing to do with any religion

DNA

QUETTA: Balochistan Minister of Planning and Development Zahoor Buledi and Finance Minister Mir Nausherwani on Friday said that foreign hostile agencies were involved in terrorist attack on Jaffar Express. Addressing a joint Press conference in Quetta, they said that present government adopted zero tolerance policy against terrorism. They said that entire world strongly condemned terrorists attack on Jaffar Express. Zahoor Buledi said that we will defeat terrorists with full force as they have nothing to do with any religion. The Provincial Minister said that Balochistan government always supported negotiations to resolve any issue. They said that we will turn Balochistan province into symbol of peace and security. Provincial Minister Shoaib Nousherwani said that now we will fight with the terrorists with different strategy. We will take stern action against those who will try to destabilize Pakistan. The spokesman of Balochistan government said that the State already issued its policy regarding negotiations. Earlier today as many as 17 days after deadly terrorist attack, the normal operation of Jaffar Express was restored with the departure of the train from Quetta also. The train service was first revived on Thursday from Peshawar where the Jaffar Express started its journey for Quetta.



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump hosted an Iftar dinner in honor of the Muslim community. Pakistan's Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh attended the event. - DNA

Powerful quake in Southeast Asia

Pakistan expresses solidarity with govts, communities affected during this challenging period: FO

AGENCIES

YANGON: A powerful earthquake rocked Southeast Asia on Friday, killing several people, bringing down a skyscraper under construction in Bangkok and toppling buildings and bridges in neighbouring Myanmar, where the ruling junta declared a state of emergency in some areas. At least three people were killed in the town of Taungoo in Myanmar when a mosque partially collapsed, witnesses said, while local media reported that at least two people died and 20 were injured after a hotel collapsed in Aung Ban. In Thailand, Bangkok Governor Chadchart Sittipunt said there had been three deaths from the quake. He warned of possible aftershocks but urged people to be calm and said the situation was largely under control. At least one person was killed and dozens of workers were rescued from under the rubble of the skyscraper that had been under construction in Bangkok, Thailand's National Institute of Emergency Medicine said. People ran out onto the streets of the Thai capital in panic, many of them hotel guests in bathrobes and swimming costumes as water cascaded down from an elevated pool at a luxury hotel, witnesses said.

Praised China's efforts Pakistan to launch Panda Bonds this year, says Fin Min

"It is important for the country to diversify its funding bases beyond the US, Europe and Islamic sukuks," says minister

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb said that Pakistan planned to launch its first Chinese Yuan denominated bond in the range of \$200m to \$250m during this colander year to fund climate related projects. In an interview with an international media outlet on the sidelines of Boao Forum in China, the finance minister said it was important for the country to diversify its funding bases beyond the US, Europe and Islamic sukuks. He said the government was currently putting together a budget that broadens the tax base by including sectors such as real estate, retail and agriculture. Responding to a question, the minister said that the government planned to soon make an announcement to

Continued on Page 06

Govt seeks Rs 1.71 per unit cut in electricity price

Federal govt submits plea to Nepra proposing power tariff cut via increased subsidy

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has formally submitted a request to the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) seeking a reduction of Rs1.71 per unit in electricity prices. According to the petition, the proposed cut in power tariff will be implemented

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

President holds meetings with envoys

Says, ambassadors designate should work to strengthen ties with the host countries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari Friday held separate meetings with the ambassadors designate of Pakistan to Morocco, Switzerland and Philippines. The ambassador designate of Pakistan to Morocco Syed Adil Gilani and the ambassador designate of Pakistan to Switzerland Dr Marghoob Saleem Butt met the President. The ambassador designate of Pakistan to the Philippines, Dr Asma Rabhani also met the President. The President said the ambassadors designate should work to further strengthen trade, economic, political and diplomatic ties with the host countries.

'Gandapur undermining PTI-JUI ties'

"Ali Amin Gandapur is the Gorbachev of PTI, says JUI-F spokesperson

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (JUI-F) Friday strongly condemned Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, accusing him of slandering Maulana Fazlur Rehman despite clear instructions from PTI founder Imran Khan to avoid such attacks. JUI spokesperson Aslam Ghauri alleged that Gandapur is deliberately creating rifts between PTI and JUI-F, warning that such divisions would ultimately benefit the government and undemocratic forces. "Ali Amin Gandapur is the Gorbachev of PTI, and the real threat to the party comes from internal conspiracies, not external ones."

Govt to fully cooperate: Naqvi

All arrangements finalized for Afghan refugees return

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi Chairs a Meeting on the Repatriation of Afghan Citizen Card Holders

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi chaired a high-level meeting to review the repatriation process of Afghan Citizen Card holders. The Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Program (IFRP) has been in effect since November 2023, and in its second phase. Afghan Citizen Card holders have been given a deadline of March 31 to voluntarily leave Pakistan. Interior Minister stated that continuous coordination is being maintained between the federal and provincial governments regarding the repatriation process, and the federal government will provide full support to the provinces. Additionally, a committee has been formed based on the recommendations of the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry will visit the provinces to resolve any issues arising during the repatriation process. Mohsin Naqvi also directed authorities to ensure respectful treatment of foreign nationals. The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Interior

Continued on Page 06

BNP-M proceeds with long march against crackdown

BNP-M leader said that the peaceful long march had successfully crossed the first obstacle despite blockades

DNA

QUETTA: Sardar Akhtar Mengal, the chief of the Balochistan National Party (BNP-M), on Friday said that they had "crossed the first obstacle" kept in their way by law enforcement personnel to stop his party's "peaceful" long march against the alleged harassment faced by Baloch women and children in recent days. The BNP-M had announced a long march from Wadh to Quetta today to protest against the arrests of Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) leaders and activists, including

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan set to receive \$ 2.3 billion IMF accord

New 28-month deal would support Pakistan's efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change

DNA

NEW YORK: Director of the Communications Department of International Monetary Fund (IMF), Julie Kozack, has said Pakistan would be able to have access of a total of 2.3 billion dollar under Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) following Staff Level Agreements (SLA). In her media briefing at IMF Headquarters in Washington, she said the IMF Executive Board on September 25, last year, approved a \$7 billion EFF arrangement for Pakistan spanning over 37 months. She added that SLA on the first review was reached on March 25, while there was also another staff-level agreement reached on the same day on RSF. She said under the EFF arrangement, which is the first review under the program, Pakistan will have access to \$1 billion after the formal approval by the IMF's Executive Board. Similarly, Pakistan would be disbursed an amount of \$1.3 billion under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility, following the approval by the IMF's Executive Board. The IMF staff reached a deal with Pakistan for a new \$1.3 billion arrangement and also agreed on the first review of the ongoing 37-month bailout programme earlier this week.


Continued on Page 06

Pakistan to present new budget after IMF consultations

FAISAL SHEIKH



ISLAMABAD: The federal government will present the budget for the fiscal year 2025-26 after consultations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), sources said. The sources in the Ministry of Finance told that another IMF delegation is expected to visit Pakistan soon for discussions. According to officials, both in-person and online consultations with the IMF will continue before finalising the budget, which is set to be presented in the first week of June. The discussions will cover key economic policies and revenue measures required to align with the IMF's recommendations. The sources also revealed that the IMF has agreed to provide limited relief in the real estate sector.




Continued on Page 06



SERENA HOTELS

Experience the magical spring season in Gilgit Baltistan

HUNZA SERENA HOTEL | SERENA ALTIT FORT RESIDENCE | SERENA KHAPLU PALACE
GILGIT SERENA HOTEL | SERENA SHIGAR FORT

CM Murad orders merger of NICVD-SICVD

The Sindh CM directed that the new Outpatient Department (OPD) Block at NICVD be completed by July or August 2025. The block is being constructed for Rs. 1 billion to accommodate the growing number of patients

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, presiding over a meeting of the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) Board, focused on reviewing the institute's performance, financial status, and future for improvement. The meeting held at CM House was attended by Sindh Health Minister Dr Azra Pechuho, Karachi Mayor Murataza Wahab, MPA Saadia Javed and Rukhsana Parveen, Principal Secretary Agha Wasif, Secretary Finance Fayaz Jatoti, Health Secretary Rehan Baloch, Professor Shahid Sami, Mush-taq Chhapra, Executive Director Professor Tahir Saghir, KCCI President Jawed Bilwani, and other concerned officials. At the outset of the meeting, the CM approved the minutes of the previous meeting and received a detailed briefing on NICVD's performance in 2024, during which a record 1,387,584 patients were treated across its network. Executive Director NICVD Professor Tahir Saghir told the CM that NICVD performed a significant number of complex cardiac procedures in 2024, including 9,925 Primary Percutaneous Coronary Interventions (PCI), 3,859 Early Invasive procedures, 760 Elective Angiographies, 18,017 Coronary An-

giographies, 2,061 Open Heart Surgeries, 75 Stroke Interventions, 1,691 Pediatric Interventions, 1,424 Pediatric Cardiac Surgeries, 291 PTMC procedures and 29 TAVI procedures. Murad Ali Shah directed that the new Outpatient Department (OPD) Block at NICVD be completed by July or August 2025. The block is being constructed for Rs. 1 billion to accommodate the growing number of patients. Moreover, a private ward and a new Coronary Care Unit (CCU) are being developed with donor support. The CM was also informed that seating arrangements for patients' attendants are being arranged with contributions from philanthropists. The Chief Minister was told that a new 300-bed paediatric unit is currently under construction. This facility will consist of a ground floor plus seven additional floors, featuring 300 beds, five operating theatres, four catheterization labs, and one hybrid lab, along with CT and MRI capabilities. It will offer a full range of modern paediatric cardiac services. The Chief Minister has directed the health department to ensure that the ground floor is operational by the end of the current financial year. The chief minister was told that NICVD's annual budget stands at Rs 9 billion, but the institute is facing a funding shortfall of Rs. 2 billion. At this, the CM said that the combined budget of NICVD and SICVD is Rs. 20 billion for the current financial year. To streamline operations and resolve financial chal-

lenges, CM Murad Ali Shah approved the merger of NICVD and SICVD. "The merger will not only cover the budget shortfall but also ensure cost savings," he said. He added that the funds saved from this move may be used to clear NICVD's outstanding liabilities. Shah said that if additional financial support is required, his government would bridge the gap. However, he constituted a committee under Secretary Finance Fayaz Jatoti to assess the financial need of the NICVD and arrange funds, if required. It was pointed out that the NICVD was overstaffed, therefore, the CM ordered that no new recruitments would be made at NICVD until further order. He directed Minister Health Dr Azra Fazal to transfer excess staff, including doctors and other employees, to the newly established NICVD-Baldia to balance workforce distribution. Murad Ali Shah directed the Minister Health to prepare a business plan for the NICVD-SICVD merger, which must be completed within three months, with the assistance of a professional consultant. He added that the revised business model for NICVD would be introduced in the next financial year to improve operational efficiency and financial sustainability. With these strategic reforms, the Sindh government aims to enhance the quality of cardiac care while ensuring the financial viability of the country's largest cardiovascular institute, the CM added.



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador designate of Pakistan to the Philippines, Dr Asima Rabbani, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

15 male, female SOs appointed in KP

DNA

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Department on Friday notified appointments of 15 male and female section officers. According to the notification, Sultan Wazir has been appointed as Section Officer (A&B) in Grade 17, while Hidayat Saeed has been assigned as Section Officer Complaints, and Muhammad Aslam as Section Officer Primary Male. Misbah Waheed has been appointed as Section Officer Schools Female, and Saeed Khan will serve as Section Officer PPPI. Additionally, Muhammad Ali has been posted as Section Officer DARC, and Fazal Ihsan has been assigned as Section Officer Inquiry. The notification further stated that Wilayat Khan has been designated as Section Officer Litigation-II, while Naimat Khan will take charge as Section Officer Audit. Jamshed Alam has been assigned as Section Officer (PMRU), and Asim Anwar will serve as Section Officer (Secret). Hassrat Khan has been appointed as Section Officer Schools Male, Samreen Jan as Section Officer R&I, Muhammad Farooq as Section Officer (R&I-III), and Waheed Ahmed as Section Officer PPP-II. The appointments have been made to improve administrative efficiency within the education department.

Power sector needs urgent reforms: Experts

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's power sector needs an integrated energy plan that goes beyond short-term fixes and adopts a categorical approach to independent power producers (IPPs), ensuring that renegotiations are strategic, inclusive, transparent, and tailored. Additionally, the revision of IPP contracts must include a thorough examination of tariff structures. Besides, it must balance affordability, availability, and investor confidence while addressing governance inefficiencies for long-term energy security and competitiveness. This was discussed during a webinar on "Reforming IPP Contracts: Reducing Tariffs and Circular Debt," held at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad. The session, chaired by Mirza Hamid Hassan, former federal secretary, Ministry of Water

and Power, was addressed by Khalid Rahman, chairman IPS, Imtiaz Hussain Baloch, DG Licensing, NEPRA, Ahad Nazir, research fellow, SDPI, AbuBakar Ismail, member FPCCI, SDG Committee, Asad Mahmood, sustainability expert, and Dr Athar Mansoor, public policy expert. Highlighting the availability- affordability paradox, Ahad Nazir noted that efforts to ensure power availability have driven up tariffs, making exports uncompetitive. Circular debt has ballooned to Rs. 2.7 trillion, primarily due to capacity payments and dollar indexation rather than contract structures alone. He warned that while the termination of some IPP contracts in October 2024 may have minimal impact on investor confidence, broader contract renegotiations must be transparent and predictable to avoid discouraging investment. Building on this, Imtiaz

Baloch pointed out that Pakistan's power sector problems stem from governance failures and an imbalanced energy mix. He stressed that tariff patterns must be thoroughly examined, particularly on the distribution side. Distribution companies require significant investment in infrastructure, governance, and technology to enhance efficiency and reduce losses. Indigenous fuel sources should also be prioritized to reduce dependency on costly imports, enhancing energy security and cost-effectiveness, he said. Endorsing this, AbuBakar Ismail stated that a technical review of tariff structures and profit margins is crucial for fair pricing and industry competitiveness. As electricity is the backbone of industrial growth, unchecked energy costs hurt Pakistan's export potential.

Rally held in Solidarity with oppressed Palestinians, Parachinar residents

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

Attack: On the call of the Muhafeze AhQuds Committee, a large protest rally was held in Attock to express solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine and Parachinar. The rally began at the central Imambarah Hussainia Kamalpur Syedan and concluded at Kacheri Chowk, passing through various key locations. Participants voiced strong condemnation of Israeli aggression and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Parachinar. The rally was led by prominent district leaders and religious, social, and political figures, including Maulana Niaz Bukhari, Syed Waqar Hussain Naqvi, Maulana Khair Ali, Sheikh Ahsan-ud-Din Advocate, Maulana Naya Ameen Mudabiri, Maulana Asad Alvi, Yasir Naqvi, Syed Hasnain Naqvi, Syed Zamin Naqvi, Syed Iqbal Naqvi, Zahid Baig, and Col (R) Sajjad Naqvi. Speakers condemned decades-long Israeli aggression in Palestine, which has resulted in the killing of hundreds of thousands of innocent Muslims. They lamented that the bombings and shelling continued even during the sacred month of Ramadan. The speakers criticized international human rights organizations for their silence and accused them of turning a blind eye due to the influence of the United States, which backs the fascist Israeli regime.—APP

Solar power gains momentum as industries expand investment

KARACHI: Pakistan's solar energy sector has gained momentum in recent years, with increasing investments in renewable energy infrastructure. The country has seen a steady rise in solar adoption across industrial, commercial, and residential sectors, driven by rising electricity costs, frequent power shortages, and government incentives promoting clean energy. Against this backdrop, global solar leader Trinasolar has further strengthened its commitment to Pakistan by signing Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with major distributors at the Solar Pakistan 2025 exhibition in Lahore. The agreements, signed with Mesol, Diwan, NMC Group, and Premier Energy, will facilitate the distribution of Trinasolar's high-performance 210mm

n-type iTOPCon Vertex N modules across Pakistan. These advanced solar modules, including the 725W (NEG21C.20), 645W (NEG19RC.20), and DUOMAX N 600W (NEG18C.20), offer high efficiency, better performance under extreme temperatures, and lower Levelized Cost of Energy (LCOE), making them well-suited to Pakistan's diverse climate conditions. Industry experts believe these partnerships will accelerate Pakistan's renewable energy transition by improving the availability of reliable and cost-effective solar solutions. Speaking at the signing, Edison Zhou, Head of Pakistan, Australia, and New Zealand at Trinasolar said: "We are proud to collaborate with leading Pakistani distributors. These agreements mark an important step in

expanding access to our latest Vertex N modules and supporting Pakistan's clean energy future." Representatives from local distributors also highlighted the importance of these collaborations. Yousuf Allahwala, Director of Mesol, stated that the partnership would bring "world-class solar technology" to Pakistan, while Saleem Diwan, CEO of Diwan, said it would help businesses achieve "maximum performance and long-term savings." The industry remains at the forefront of the global solar industry, recently surpassing 170GW in 210mm module shipments, maintaining its position as a BNEF Tier 1 Energy Storage Manufacturer, and reinforcing its commitment to innovation and sustainability.—APP

SCCI for revival of sick, closed industries in KP

PESHAWAR: A preliminary meeting of the Sectoral Committee on Revitalization of Sick and closed industrial units in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was held under chairmanship of its head and former president of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fuad Ishaq. According to details, the sectoral committee was formed by the provincial government under the New KP Industrial Policy 2025-30 and former president of SCCI Fuad Ishaq made its chairman. The forum was attended by SCCI president Fazal Moqeem Khan, KPEZDMC senior officials Fakhar Alam Sahibzada, Anwaar Zia, Muhammad Rafiq, SMEDA Provincial Chief Rashid Aman, KPBOIT Director Business Facilitation Sarwar Iqbal and others senior officials concerned as members of the body and Secretary General SCCI Muqtasid Ahsan and others. The forum comprehensively discussed the overall situation and presented a number of proposals for revival of sick and closed industries in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Fuad Ishaq while speaking on the occasion called for a special incentive package, tax-holidays, especially provision of soft loans for revival of sick and closed industries in KP. He appraised the forum about main reasons behind closure and non-functional industries, including terrorism, regulation, policies and other important points and elements. Participants and members presented various proposals for revival of sick and closed industrial units in the province. Speakers stressed the revitalization of sick and closed industries should be prioritized in the new Industrial Policy 2025-30. The forum lauded KP government initiatives for industrialization, which would bring economic stability and boost trade and economic activities in the province.



ISLAMABAD: Security Personnel are performing their duty very significantly to counter any unexpected situation during Jum'atul-Wida prayer at Shah Faisal Mosque, which is the last Friday prayer to indicate the end of Ramadan and it is the day of forgiveness and sprility for the Muslims around the World.



General Practice Hospital is a state-of-the-art healthcare for the community. Our hospital is equipped with advanced specialized OPD clinics, an urgent care unit, a modern theatres, an on-site laboratory for precise diagnostics, dialysis are dedicated to providing quality, easily accessible, and professional environment.



- OPD CLINICS
- IN-PATIENT ROOMS
- INTENSIVE CARE UNIT (ICU)
- MATERNITY CARE UNIT
- DIALYSIS CARE UNIT
- 24/7 EMERGENCY ROOM
- OPERATION THEATRES
- DAY CARE SURGERY
- NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT (NICU)
- DIAGNOSTIC LAB

National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

- March 01/Bosnia National Day
- March 03/Bulgaria National Day
- March 06/ Ghana Independence Day
- March 12 /Mauritius National Day
- March 17/Ireland St. Patrick's Day
- March 20/Tunisia Independence Day
- March 21/Namibia National Day
- March 25/Greece National Day
- March 26/Bangladesh National Day
- March 27/Myanmar Armed Forces Day

Hotels & Restaurants



Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
Marriott.....051-2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people offering Namaz-e-Juma-tul-Wida 'at Faisal Masjid .

Thousands return home for Eid celebrations

ISLAMABAD :As the holy festival of Eid-ul-Fitr approaches, thousands of residents have begun returning to their hometowns across Pakistan, eager to celebrate the joyous occasion with loved ones.

The exodus of people from major cities to their native towns has resulted in overcrowded highways, bus stations, and train terminals. Despite the chaos, the atmosphere remains festive, with travelers eager to reunite with family and friends. An Islamabad resident Saima who returned to her ancestral village said "As a child, I remember traveling with my family to our village every Eid, those were care-free days, filled with laughter and love and I am excited to relive those memories with my own family now." She said "I have been waiting for this moment for months as there is no place like home, especially during Eid and the excitement and joy of celebrating with loved ones is unmatched."

She said for many, the journey home is a nostalgic one, filled with memories of childhood Eid celebrations. Spokesperson for the Ministry of Railways said "We are thrilled to see so many people returning home to celebrate Eid with their loved ones, and we have taken extra measures to ensure comfortable and safe travel for all passengers." He said the government has made arrangements to facilitate the smooth travel of citizens, with additional buses, trains, and flights operating during the Eid holidays.

As the country gears up for Eid celebrations, the sense of excitement and joy is palpable adding that for those returning home, the journey is not just about physical distance, but also about reconnecting with roots and cherishing time with loved ones, he stated.—APP

Five die, 13 injure as bus overturns near Kallar Kahar

ISLAMABAD: At least five passengers lost their lives and another 13 sustained wounds when a bus overturned near Kallar Kahar in the wee hours of Friday. The motorways police said, the accident occurred at the Motorway M2 in the Salt Range near Chakwal where a bus going to Vehari from Rawalpindi turned turtle due to brakes failure. Soon after receiving the report of the incident, police and rescue teams reached the spot and shifted the dead and injured to Trauma Centre Kallar Kahar. According to initial information, the accident occurred due to the negligence of the driver. According to rescue sources, the death toll may rise further as some of the injured were in critical condition.—APP

ISSI signs letter of coop (LoC) with Myanmar institute

Ambassador of Myanmar in Islamabad, His Excellency Wunna Han, and Mr Anwar Zeb, Pakistan's Chargé d'Affaires in Yangon also attended the ceremony

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) and the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies (MISIS) have signed a Letter of Cooperation (LoC) to strengthen research collaboration and dialogue between the two institutions. From MISIS side, the virtually held ceremony was attended by Ambassador U Thant Kyaw, Chairman of MISIS; executive board members of MISIS; and researchers. From ISSI side, the ceremony was attended by Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General, ISSI; Dr. Khuram Abbas, Director India Study Centre, and researchers. Ambassador of Myanmar in Islamabad, His Excellency Wunna Han, and

Mr Anwar Zeb, Pakistan's Chargé d'Affaires in Yangon also attended the ceremony. The LoC was signed by Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General, ISSI and Ambassador U Thant Kyaw, Chairman of MISIS. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood emphasized that the signing of the Letter of Cooperation (LoC) further formalizes the framework for institutional cooperation between ISSI and MISIS, building on the Working Protocol signed in October 2024. He noted that the changing international landscape will lead to new developments in South Asia, East Asia, and the wider world, making our exchanges and mutual cooperation crucial in analyzing these developments. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood expressed satisfaction with the progress on joint research by researchers

from both institutions, setting the stage for deeper cooperation. He acknowledged the valuable support of the two Embassies in Yangon and Islamabad. He also highlighted Ambassador Wunna Han's efforts as Chair of the ASEAN Committee Islamabad (ACI). He concluded by saying that the signing of the LoC will open up new opportunities to further deepen this partnership. Ambassador U Thant Kyaw extended his gratitude to both Embassies for their valuable support. He stated that the signing of the LoC will be another milestone in mutual research and collaboration following the October 2024 Working Protocol. This will expand opportunities for ideas exchange and foster a collaborative environment, maximizing engagements. He acknowledged the joint research

efforts and introduced the MISIS researcher. He noted that the world is changing at an unprecedented level, affecting both the developed and developing nations including Myanmar and Pakistan. Ambassador Wunna Han while commenting on the progress made after the signing of WP, expressed gratification over the signing of the LoC within just six months and commended the efforts for joint research. Ambassador Wunna also stressed the need for stronger ties between Myanmar and Pakistan, as well as enhanced collaboration between the two think-tanks including through exchange of visits. The dynamic geopolitical landscape, he noted, will require both countries to remain vigilant and proactive in managing their relationships with key neighbors. Mr. Anwar Zeb,

speaking on behalf of the Embassy of Pakistan in Myanmar, said that Pakistan and Myanmar enjoyed cordial relations, and emphasized that the timing for concluding LOC is ideal for further collaboration. He expressed his optimism that the ongoing efforts will lead to mutually beneficial outcomes and continued goodwill on both sides. The successful collaboration between ISSI and MISIS stands as a testament to the strong partnership between Pakistan and Myanmar, and signals a positive direction for future cooperation. The ceremony concluded with a group photograph and reaffirmation of shared commitment to exploring new avenues for cooperation and contributing to deeper understanding of strategic issues in the region.

Danish company to launch training program for engineers

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik, held a meeting with His Excellency Jakob Linulf, the Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan, today at the Petroleum Division. The discussions focused on enhancing bilateral cooperation in the energy sector, with special emphasis on mining sector and technological collaboration. The meeting highlighted the critical role of Danish expertise in Pakistan's mining and mineral development sector. In particular, the contributions of FLSmidth, a global leader in sustainable mining technology and equipment, were recognized for their potential

to modernize Pakistan's mining operations. FLSmidth's advanced solutions in cement production, mineral processing, and decarbonization align with Pakistan's goals of increasing efficiency and reducing environmental impact in its extractive industries.

Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik expressed Pakistan's keen interest in leveraging Danish technology and investment to optimize resource extraction and processing as the country has significant mineral reserves. The Minister extended his full support and offered



the government's good offices to facilitate Danish investment and technology transfer in Pakistan's growing mining sector. He further emphasized the government's commitment to creating an investor-friendly environment and invited Danish companies, including FLSmidth, to explore partnerships with Pakistani firms during the Pakistani Minerals Investment Forum happening on April 8-9, 2025. Ambassador reaffirmed Denmark's support for Pakistan's energy transition and industrial growth. He enlightened that Denmark is looking forward to Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum.—APP

Shaping Tomorrow's Leaders' mentorship session held

RAWALPINDI: The Mentorship Program Committee (MPC) at Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU) on Thursday conducted an insightful mentorship session on Leadership, reaffirming its commitment to fostering future leaders. The session, designed to equip mentees with essential leadership competencies, provided an in-depth exploration of key leadership traits, decision-making strategies, and the importance of ethical and strategic thinking in professional and personal development. In her interactive address, Prof. Dr. Bushra Mirza (PoP, TI), Vice Chancellor of FJWU, led a compelling discussion on the core attributes of effective leadership, including adaptability, resilience, and ethical decision-making. She shared thought-provoking insights from her leadership journey, illustrating how strategic thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to inspire and influence others contribute to professional success. She highlighted the evolving landscape of leadership in the modern world, stressing the need for women leaders to embrace challenges, cultivate a growth mindset, and empower others in their respective fields.

Environmental journalists quarterly meeting held

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Muhammad Ashraf, IWMI's Country Representative in Pakistan Thursday shed light on the issues of climate change, groundwater depletion, and poor water storage practices. He also highlighted that the country heavy reliance on monsoon rains underscored the importance of water storage to make sure the availability of water for whole year. He was addressing at the Environmental Journalists Quarterly Meeting (EJQM) organized by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI). The event, part of the Water Resource Accountability in Pakistan (WRAP) program funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), sought to raise awareness and promote sustainable water management solutions through expert-led discussions, said a press release. He said groundwater depletion is also a major concern in urban areas like Islamabad, water tables are declining by about 1 meter annually, while in regions such as Quetta, the depletion rate is 6 meters per year. Dr. Jehanzeb Cheema, Deputy Country Representative at IWMI and Deputy Project Leader of the WRAP program, highlighted the strides being made under the Climate Resilient Solutions for Improving Water Governance (CRS-IWaG) initiative. He said that the program aims to improve water governance at both federal and provincial levels, including the development of water accounting guidelines, early drought warning systems, and the launch of the Groundwater Management Information System (GMIS). IWMI has also identified thousands of potential sites for small dams and water storage ponds in regions like Pothwar, to alleviate water shortages. Meanwhile, the EJQM underscored the importance of media engagement in addressing environmental issues. They also emphasized the role of journalists in bridging gaps between researchers, policymakers, and the public, fostering informed discussions that can drive meaningful changes in water governance and climate resilience. —DNA

MARCH 2025

Pakistan's Premier News & Diplomatic Affairs Magazine

Find us on:

www.centrelines.com.pk
www.dnanews.com.pl
www.islamabadpost.com.pk

@Postislamabad/ @Editordnanews

A sister concern of

Islamabad POST

11# Block 18-A, Awan Plaza,
G-8 Markez, Islamabad-Pakistan
Ph: 051-2261960, 051-2266165



Briefs

President lauds security forces

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday commended the security forces for eliminating 11 terrorists in different operations conducted in Dera Ismail Khan and North Waziristan. The president, in a statement, praised the bravery of the security forces for killing the terrorist elements of Fitnat-ul-Khawarij during the intelligence-based operation. He said that the entire nation stood with its security forces actively carrying out operations to eliminate terrorism. President Zardari reaffirmed the nation's commitment to the complete eradication of terrorism from the country.—APP

SECP enhances disclosure requirements

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has issued a circular introducing enhanced disclosure requirements for Fund Manager Reports (FMRs) by Asset Management Companies (AMCs). These measures are aimed at promoting transparency and enabling investors and unitholders of Collective Investment Schemes (CIS) to make more informed decisions, said a press release issued here on Friday. Key enhancements include disclosure of Actual Expenses as a percentage of net assets, applicable sales loads, monthly Portfolio Turnover Ratios, risk adjusted return, Yield to Maturity, Modified Duration, Macaulay Duration, Beta and Standard Deviation. Further, FMR must also disclose comparative analysis of benchmark and committed returns. In addition, index descriptions and tracking difference history for ETF are also mandated.—APP

Shalwar Kameez dominates Eid shopping

ISLAMABAD: Eid ul Fitr fervor grips the nation as vibrant colours and bustling markets signal the start of festive celebrations, where intricately designed shalwar kameez and colorful bangles emerge as the season's most sought-after items. The traditional attire of Shalwar Kameez and colorful bangles have taken center stage, dominating the shopping trends across the country, said a report aired by PTV News. "The demand for intricately designed Shalwar Kameez and vibrant bangles has skyrocketed, with shoppers flocking to markets and shopping malls to pick up the latest designs and trends", said shopkeepers. The report highlighted the bustling markets of Lahore, Karachi, Multan, Peshawar, Quetta, and Islamabad, where shoppers are eagerly snapping up the traditional attire, making Shalwar Kameez and colorful bangles the most sought-after items this Eid. "We have sold out most of our branded Shalwar Kameez collections, including popular designer, a shopkeeper at a popular clothing store in Lahore".—APP

Pollen reactions causing eye issues: Al-Shifa Trust

Masses advised precautions during the spring season. Safeguards can help the public avoid discomfort

DNA

RAWALPINDI: On Friday, Al-Shifa Trust (AST) announced that pollen levels in Rawalpindi and Islamabad have notably increased during the current season, so the masses should take preventive measures to avoid the discomfort associated with this issue. It said this rise in pollen concentration has resulted in a corresponding surge in allergy-related symptoms among the local population. Prof. Dr. Inam-ul-Haq, senior consultant at Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital Rawalpindi, said that residents should take preventive measures, such as wearing protective sunglasses, to reduce the effects of high pollen exposure. He added that those with pre-existing allergies or asthma must take additional preventive measures and use air purifiers. Talking to media men, he said that the spring season has unfolded, and pollen allergies can trigger a range of eye-related symptoms, including red, itchy, and burning eyes. He said these symptoms can be ac-



companied by excessive tearing, swelling, and sensitivity to light. Eye allergies are not typically dangerous but can cause significant discomfort and disrupt daily

activities. He added that in most cases, eye allergies are also associated with other allergic reactions, such as sneezing, nasal congestion, and a runny nose. Prof.

Dr. Inam-ul-Haq said eye allergies occur when the immune system overreacts, producing antibodies that trigger the release of histamine and other chemicals. This

reaction leads to inflammation, redness, and excessive tearing. He said the best approach to managing eye allergies is minimizing exposure to allergens. He recommended preventive measures like staying indoors when pollen counts are high, keeping windows closed, using air conditioning to filter air, and wearing protective sunglasses to prevent pollen from reaching the eyes. He said people should shut car windows and use air conditioning to reduce allergen exposure. He said that eyedrops like loteprednol (Alrex, Lotemax) treat eye allergies, adding that they should be used only briefly because they can cause side effects. Prof. Dr. Inam-ul-Haq said that seasonal pollen allergies can be uncomfortable but are manageable with the proper precautions and treatments. People should follow preventive strategies and consult an ophthalmologist when necessary. He informed that nearly 80 percent of patients receive free treatment in all trust-run hospitals in Rawalpindi, Chakwal, Kohat, Sukkur, Muzaffarabad, and Gilgit.

Water scarcity devastating for agri, economy

To mitigate the effects of water scarcity, the government must take emergency measures such as building additional water reservoirs, implementing rainwater harvesting techniques, and promoting drought-resistant crops

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, a business leader and former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), stated on Friday that Pakistan is facing a serious drought challenge due to below-average rainfall. He said that the gravity of the situation requires immediate and co-ordinated efforts to address its effects before it develops into a full-blown crisis. He said that water scarcity will seriously impact agriculture, the economy, and people's lives, leading to severe food insecurity, loss of livelihoods, and a decline in economic productivity. He observed that farmers struggling with increasing input costs will be the most brutal hit, as drought conditions may lead to reduced yields, crop failures, and financial losses. Shahid Rash-

eed Butt said in a statement issued here today that there is a possibility of a 50 percent reduction in production due to drought, which may intensify the problem of food security. This could result in rising food prices, inflation, and further economic strain on lower-income groups. He demanded urgent steps to deal with the alarming situation so that matters do not worsen. He urged the government and relevant authorities to formulate immediate drought management strategies, improve water conservation efforts, and explore alternative irrigation methods to sustain agricultural output. The business leader said that at least a 40 percent reduction in rainfall had been recorded from September to March this year, affecting the entire country. However, it has significantly impacted Sindh province, where agricultural depend-

ence on rainfall is exceptionally high. He warned that if this trend continues, the agricultural economy of Sindh and other affected regions will suffer irreparable damage. He said that much of the country consists of rain-fed areas where agricultural depends on rain. On the other hand, melting snow is very slow, which has reduced the flow of various rivers. This has further exacerbated the crisis by reducing the availability of water for irrigation, drinking, and industrial use. The water level in Tarbela and Mangla dams has also reached a dead level, raising serious concerns about energy production, irrigation, and drinking water supplies. To mitigate the effects of water scarcity, the government must take emergency measures such as building additional water reservoirs, implementing rainwater harvesting techniques, and promoting drought-resistant crops.

Special Eid trains begin operations to facilitate passengers

ISLAMABAD: The government has launched special Eid trains on key routes during Eid-ul-Fitr to help people reach their hometowns safely and on time. According to the schedule, the first special train departed from Karachi Cantonment to Lahore on March 26 (Wednesday). It has 16 coaches and will pass through Hyderabad, Rohri, Multan, and Sahiwal. The second train also left on March 26 from Quetta to Peshawar Cantonment with 11 coaches, traveling via Multan and Sahiwal. On March 27, the third special train will depart from Lahore to Karachi with 16 coaches, stopping at Khanewal, Multan, Sahiwal, and Rohri. To further assist passengers, Pakistan Railways has announced a 20 percent discount on train fares across all classes. This discount will be available for the first three days of Eid and will apply to mail, express, passenger, and intercity trains. The initiative, introduced on the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, aims to reduce travel costs and help people celebrate with their families. The government remains committed to providing affordable, safe, and comfortable train services for all citizens.—APP

Shalwar Kameez dominates Eid shopping

ISLAMABAD: Eid ul Fitr fervor grips the nation as vibrant colours and bustling markets signal the start of festive celebrations, where intricately designed shalwar kameez and colorful bangles emerge as the season's most sought-after items. The traditional attire of Shalwar Kameez and colorful bangles have taken center stage, dominating the shopping trends across the country, said a report aired by PTV News. "The demand for intricately designed Shalwar Kameez and vibrant bangles has skyrocketed, with shoppers flocking to markets and shopping malls to pick up the latest designs and trends", said shopkeepers. The report highlighted the bustling markets of Lahore, Karachi, Multan, Peshawar, Quetta, and Islamabad, where shoppers are eagerly snapping up the traditional attire, making Shalwar Kameez and colorful bangles the most sought-after items this Eid. We have sold out most of our branded Shalwar Kameez collections, including popular designer, a shopkeeper at a popular clothing store in Lahore". Another shopkeeper from Karachi's Tariq Road market added, "this Eid, we have seen a huge demand for traditional Shalwar Kameez with intricate embroidery and patterns, adding, fersh shalwar kameez is also a popular trend among youngsters. The high demand for both branded and local Shalwar Kameez has resulted in a surge in sales, with many shopkeepers reporting a significant increase in business compared to previous years. "Bangles are an essential part of any Eid celebration," said a shopkeeper at a popular bangle store. "No Eid is complete without them. We have a wide range of designs and colors, and customers are snapping them up quickly." "Bangles are always a part of women's shopping, especially during Eid," added a customer at the market. "I buy bangles every year, and this time I am looking for something special, maybe some intricate glasswork or sparkling stones." Young girls, in particular, were excited about the latest fashion trends. "I am looking for a fancy Fersh Shalwar Kameez with matching bangles," said a student at a local college. "I want to look stylish and elegant on Eid day with matching bangles with my shalwar dress.—DNA

Kitchen Items' prices dip by 0.15pc

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), decreased by 0.15 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on March 27, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 319.14 points as compared to 319.62 points during the past week. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined

consumption group in the week under review witnessed a decrease of 1.26 per cent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group of up to Rs 17,732 witnessed decrease of 0.21 per cent and went down to 307.79 points from last week's 308.43 points. The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,732 to 22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175, went down

by 0.20 percent, 0.16 percent, 16 percent and 0.13 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 10 (19.61%) items increased, 10 (19.61%) items decreased and 31 (60.78%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded major decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included Onions (4.68%), Bananas (4.27%), Eggs (3.87%), Garlic (2.23%), Potatoes (1.47%), Chicken (1.29%), Sugar (0.94%) and Pulse Gram (0.67%). The commodities

which recorded major increase in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included Tomatoes (9.62%), LPG (1.17%), Lawn Printed (0.62%), Pulse Mash (0.56%), Gur (0.51%), Beef (0.30%), Long Cloth (0.29%), Pulse Masoor (0.20%), Mustard Oil (0.13%) and Vegetable Ghee 2.5 kg (0.10%). Year-on-year basis, the commodities that witnessed decrease included Onions (68.64%), Wheat Flour (33.33%), Chilies Powder (20.00%), Electricity Charges for Q1 (18.92%), Tea Lipton (16.98%), Pulse Mash (13.35%), Tomatoes (12.08%), Pulse Masoor (11.21%), Rice Basmati Broken (9.51%), Diesel (9.37%), Petrol (8.55%) and LPG (1.82%).—APP

Sardar Muhammad Yousaf reaches the power corridors

DNA

MANSEHRA: In the rugged terrains of Mansehra, a region that has long been marked by its socio-economic disparities, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf has emerged as a resolute leader, dedicated to changing the lives of the downtrodden and marginalized communities. His historic struggle for the rights of peasants and laborers, along with his tireless efforts to dismantle the long-standing power of the feudal system, has made him one of the most influential voices of the subalterns in the region. Over the four decades, his leadership has broken social cycles, empowered the oppressed, and brought a sense of hope and justice to those who had long been denied both. Sardar Muhammad Yousaf's journey as a champion for the subalterns in Mansehra began with his deep understanding of the hardships faced by peasants, and the rural poor. For

decades, the region had been dominated by influential landlords who controlled the land and resources, leaving the common people in a perpetual state of poverty and subjugation. However, he was undeterred by the entrenched systems of power. He realized that real change could only be achieved by empowering the marginalized and breaking the social chains that kept them bound. His 50 years political journey began at the grassroots level, where he mobilized the peasantry and laborers, advocating for their rights to land, and a better standard of living. His unwavering stand against the landlords, who had historically exploited the poor, earned him both admiration and the ire of the powerful elite. However, Yousaf's commitment to the peasants never wavered, and his efforts to challenge the existing power structures have forever altered the social fabric of the region. One of the defining features of Sardar Yousaf's leadership has been his abil-

ity to tactfully deal with the powerful landlords, who were often resistant to change. He did not resort to confrontational politics but used a strategy of negotiation and persuasion to gradually dismantle the control these landlords had over the local population. His approach was rooted in pragmatism, and he always ensured that the needs of the peasant class were placed at the center of every policy discussion. By pushing for land reforms and ensuring that peasants had more access to resources, Yousaf made significant strides in improving the economic conditions of Mansehra's rural communities. His success in weakening the hold of landlords and empowering the lower classes was not only a political victory but a moral one, as he proved that the power of the people could overcome the dominance of the few. Sardar Yousaf's leadership and dedication to the people of Mansehra were recognized nationally when he was elected as a Member of the

National Assembly (MNA) five times. Each term reinforced his popularity among the masses, who saw him as a true representative of their interests. His political journey, which has been defined by his constant advocacy for the subalterns, culminated in his appointment as a Federal Minister. Under Sardar Yousaf's leadership, the social cycle in Mansehra has been forever changed. His advocacy for the rights of the low and deprived communities has empowered them, not just economically, but also socially and politically. Through his leadership, thousands of families in the region have gained better access to education, healthcare, and basic infrastructure. Moreover, his focus on skill development and employment opportunities has enabled many to break free from the vicious cycle of poverty. Sardar Yousaf's ability to connect with the people, understand their issues, and then work relentlessly to find solutions has earned him their trust and respect.

RCP holds Ramadan Cricket Cup

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Cantonment Board, under the special instructions of the Director General Military Lands and Cantonments (ML&C), organized the Ramadan Cricket Cup at the Ayub Park Cricket Ground. Sixteen teams from Rawalpindi Cantonment participated in the tournament. The final match was played between Warriors and Khattak Eleven, with Warriors winning the title by defeating Khattak Eleven by 32 runs. Warriors scored 99 runs in eight overs, while Khattak Eleven managed to score 67 runs. The Additional Cantonment Executive Officer, Rwp Cantt distributed trophies and cash prizes among the winning team. The tournament was organized to promote sports activities and provide healthy entertainment to the residents of the cantonment. The objective of organizing the Ramadan Cricket Cup was to provide opportunities for young people to engage in healthy sports activities. By providing sports facilities and promoting sports, the youth can be nurtured and developed. Sixteen teams from Rawalpindi Cantonment participated in the Ramadan Cricket Cup. The run-up team also received cash prizes.—APP

Pakistan to host first Digital FDI event

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will host its first-ever Digital Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) event on April 29 and 30 to attract international investors by showcasing opportunities in the country's digital and IT sectors. "This is an opportunity for the world to recognize Pakistan as a new hub for technology and innovation," said an official from the Ministry of IT. The event will include high-level meetings, policy discussions, and networking sessions, fostering international collaboration in technology and digital investments. According to the official, this initiative is a major step toward positioning Pakistan as a regional center for technology. "It's not just an event; it reflects Pakistan's readiness to be part of the global digital economy," he added. Pakistan is organizing the forum in partnership with the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO), led by Saudi Arabia. Member states of the DCO and other nations are expected to attend, making it a global platform for digital investment.—APP

The Smooth Moving Connection

freeline MOVERS

PACKING, SHIPPING & FREIGHT FORWARDING

Our Services

- Packing
- Shipping
- Freight Forwarding
- Land, Sea & Air Freight
- Custom Clearance
- Relocations
- Office Removals
- Fine Art Handling
- Project Management
- Pet Relocation
- Warehousing
- Storage

Head Office
3rd Floor, Yasin Plaza, 74-West, Blue Area, Islamabad.
Tel: (+92 51) 2822471, 2274221, 2878029, 2272273, 2822711, 2874289 - Fax: (+92 51) 2825132, 2274227.
E-mail: moving@freelinemovers.com - Website: www.freelinemovers.com

Branch Offices

Karachi	Lahore	Peshawar	Kabul
Room No. 14 & 15, 3rd Floor, Alkhalifa Mall, Main Tariq Road, 77-1 Block 2, P.O. C.H.S. Karachi. Tel: (+92 21) 3423174, 3423175, 3423176, 3423177. Fax: (+92 21) 3423174. E-mail: karachi@freelinemovers.com	F-4, Gulberg Centre, Main Boulevard, Lahore. Tel: (+92 42) 3579881, 3579885. Fax: (+92 42) 3579420. E-mail: lahore@freelinemovers.com	Office No. C-8, 2nd Floor, Zafar Plaza, Laff Road, Ring Road, Peshawar. Tel: (+92 91) 2525778. Fax: (+92 91) 2525289. E-mail: peshawar@freelinemovers.com	House # 4, Street # 4, Charsal Awar Road, Shahr-e-Naw, Kabul, Afghanistan. Tel: (+92 7002) 173, 53 707595. Fax: (+92 7002) 173, 53 707595. E-mail: kabul@freelinemovers.com

Lebanese–Syrian strife

THE collapse of the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad in December and the takeover by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), led by Ahmad al-Sharaa, marked a turning point for Lebanon's security institutions. With celebratory gunfire in parts of Lebanon and armed factions aligning themselves with the new order in Damascus, the appearance of extremist groups – and a flow of weapons into the hands of extremist Sunni militants hostile to Hezbollah – sparked immediate alarm. These fears were laid bare during the first official meeting between Sharaa and former Lebanese prime minister Najib Mikati, attended by Lebanon's security brass, a little over a month after the Assad government fell. While the new Syrian officials gave the usual reassurances about border control and distanced themselves from any intention to repeat the chaos of previous years, Sharaa issued his own warnings – chiefly about ISIS cells forming in northern Lebanon. But what followed painted a different picture: a series of escalating incidents that suggested Sharaa's diminishing authority over the very factions with which he was once aligned. Inside Syria, the transitional president's failure was even starker. Minorities, particularly Alawites and Shia, voiced mounting fears as HTS forces secured Damascus. Around 50,000 fled to Lebanon in the first week alone, seeking refuge in the east, north, and Beirut's southern suburbs. Their fears would soon prove valid. According to the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), 1,383 civilians – mostly Alawites – were killed in coastal massacres. The spillover into Lebanon was immediate: sectarian tremors shook the fragile north and the Shia-populated eastern border villages. The Lebanese tribes who had long settled in Syrian border towns found themselves forced out amid growing violence and suspicion. A second wave of displacement followed. This time, an estimated additional 90,000 Syrians crossed into Lebanon in the wake of the coastal bloodshed and HTS's rise. Most entered through informal crossings, making accurate counts nearly impossible. By contrast, 10,000 to 15,000 Syrians – mainly supporters of the new order – returned home through legal channels. On the security front, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) have moved to prevent broader escalation, and largely succeeded – aside from sporadic clashes. But the coastal massacres quickly became fodder for the larger, ongoing, decades-long western project: Sunni-Shia sedition. But this would necessitate HTS escalating attacks and blaming Hezbollah – thus giving the occupation state pretexts to strike and inviting "international stabilization forces" under the guise of peacekeeping. Meanwhile, the disinformation machine has shifted into high gear. Fake statements appeared on social media under the names of municipalities affiliated with Amal and Hezbollah, warning Syrians of imminent attacks. These were quickly countered by fake responses from Sunni-majority towns, warning Shia residents not to target Syrians. Several real-world attacks followed. In Beirut's southern suburb of Bir al-Abed, three individuals assaulted Syrian residents. In Chiyah, six men stopped Syrians, searched their phones, and forced them out – until local residents intervened to stop the aggression. In response, the Amal Movement's Municipal Affairs Office and Hezbollah's Municipal Work Unit issued a joint statement urging the public not to fall into the trap of domestic strife in the service of foreign agendas. They called on Lebanese authorities to immediately investigate and prosecute those behind the incitement.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 05 Issue: 288

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



Boao forum for Asia

THE Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) Annual Conference 2025 kicked off on Thursday under the theme of "Building Trust in the Shifting Global Landscape." This year, more than 1,500 representatives from more than 60 countries and regions attended the opening ceremony. Amid the rise of unilateralism, the cloud of trade war and the sluggish global economic recovery, the international community is paying attention to the "choice of Asia" and calling for "Asian solutions." This event has conveyed the powerful roar of the Asian engine, injecting certainty into the world with the wisdom of regional cooperation. At present, the world economy is facing a severe challenge. The trade protectionist policies and populist tendencies of some countries continue to fragment the global industrial chain. Despite the complexity and volatility of the external environment, Asia's economy is still showing strong resilience. The Asian Economic Outlook and Integration Progress Annual Report 2025 released by the BFA projects that the weighted real GDP growth rate of Asia is estimated to reach 4.5 percent in 2025, and at purchasing power parity, the ratio of Asia's GDP among the global total is expected to rise to 48.6 percent in 2025. Asian economies, such as China, India, Vietnam, the Philippines, Mongolia, Cambodia and Indonesia, will continue to maintain a high growth rate of over 5 percent. Asia has, in fact, become the core engine of global growth and a well-deserved "stabilizing anchor" for the world economy. A valuable consensus underpinning Asia's development is "openness," which translates economic complementarity into accelerated development. Nowadays, China's "new three" – new energy vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and photovoltaic products – are shipping to Laos, Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries by the Lancang-Mekong Express service on the China-Laos Railway, while China's domestically built large cruise ship Adora Magic City is carrying tourists from China, Japan and South Korea to cities including Shanghai, Fukuoka and Jeju. From the to-be-jointly built AI innovation cooperation center signed by China and Laos to the Pakistani astronauts who will enter the Chinese space station in the future, these all demonstrate that countries reinforce each other in cooperation and move toward a more promising future. According to the International Monetary Fund, the GDP of the members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership will grow by 10.9 trillion dollars from 2023 to 2029, and Asian countries embracing openness are the first to enjoy the dividends of development. Asia's developmental resilience is also rooted in the innovation of development models. Currently, Asia's R&D investment intensity and patent applications far exceed those of the rest of the world, and it is increasingly becoming a main character in science and technology innovation globally. In addition, Asia has demonstrated strong development potential in the areas of digital economy and green economy. With the wide application of technologies, such as 5G, AI and big data, the construction of digital infrastructure in Asia is advancing rapidly, providing strong support for economic transformation and upgrading. Asia is already at the forefront of a new round of industrial revolution. This year's BFA has kept abreast of the pulse of the times, with more relevant and forward-looking topics, reflecting the vibrant development potential of a "diverse Asia" and amplifying the voice of the Global South. This change reflects BFA's redefinition of multilateralism – it is not a "talking shop" dominated by a few major powers, but rather a "task force" focused on addressing regional and global challenges.

The Pakistan democracy act: An exercise in futility?

Qamar Bashir



Industries particularly vulnerable include textiles, apparel, surgical instruments, and agriculture, which represent a substantial share of Pakistan's exports to the U.S. Such economic distress could lead to deepening financial instability, further escalating inflation and intensifying domestic political unrest. It may lead to the U.S. withdrawing support for Pakistan's financing through the IMF, World Bank, or other international institutions, the consequences for Pakistan would be severe. Such a scenario could severely restrict Pakistan's ability to secure essential financial assistance, as the US holds substantial influence...

IN March 2025, a bold and controversial bill titled the "Pakistan Democracy Act" was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Congressmen Joe Wilson (Republican-South Carolina) and Jimmy Panetta (Democrat-California). The bill calls for targeted sanctions against individuals in Pakistan, particularly within the military and judiciary, accused of manipulating the 2024 elections and repressing democratic institutions, including the imprisonment of former Prime Minister Imran Khan. One of the most prominent figures named in the bill is General Asim Munir, the Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan, who is alleged to have played a key role in orchestrating the political crackdown. Institutions such as the Pakistan Army, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and elements within the Election Commission of Pakistan are also indirectly implicated for facilitating or turning a blind eye to anti-democratic practices. This move, though rooted in a commitment to democratic values, opens a Pandora's box of questions about international law, bilateral relations, historical precedent, and strategic fallout. According to the official bill, the key provisions include requiring the U.S. President to submit a report within 180 days of enactment identifying individuals in Pakistan responsible for undermining the democratic process, unjust detainment of political opponents, and restriction of freedoms. It authorizes targeted sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Act, such as asset freezes and visa bans, restricts property transactions in the U.S., and denies entry to the identified individuals. Additionally, it proposes suspension of U.S. security or economic aid unless democratic norms are restored and encourages increased funding for democratic movements and independent journalism in Pakistan. If the bill is passed by Congress in its current form, the President could sign the bill, making it law but still maintaining flexibility in enforcing its sanctions, especially regarding identifying targeted individuals and the scope of measures applied. Alternatively, the President might veto the bill, sending it back to Congress with stated objections; Congress would then need a challenging two-thirds majority in both chambers to override this veto. Each presidential choice carries significant diplomatic and domestic consequences: signing signals firm democratic accountability but risks diplomatic conflict with Pakistan; vetoing demonstrates strategic caution but may attract domestic criticism for perceived inaction. If passed, it could result in travel restrictions and asset freezes for Pakistani officials, including General Asim Munir and other unnamed military, intelli-

gence, and judicial actors. This could strain U.S.-Pakistan diplomatic and military cooperation and lead to reciprocal measures from Pakistan. If Pakistan's parliament responds by introducing a counter-bill imposing sanctions on U.S. government officials and companies operating within its territory, it would signify a substantial escalation in bilateral tensions. Such retaliatory sanctions might involve visa restrictions, asset freezes, operational limitations, or expulsion of American NGOs and businesses, severely straining the economic and diplomatic relationship. In turn, should the U.S. government escalate further by imposing additional tariffs or restrictive economic measures on Pakistani imports, the consequences would be severe and multidimensional. Economically, if the U.S. imposes additional tariffs or sanctions under the Pakistan Democracy Act, Pakistan could face significant reductions in exports, diminished foreign exchange earnings, inflationary pressures, and slower economic growth, adversely impacting employment and overall public welfare. Industries particularly vulnerable include textiles, apparel, surgical instruments, and agriculture, which represent a substantial share of Pakistan's exports to the U.S. Such economic distress could lead to deepening financial instability, further escalating inflation and intensifying domestic political unrest. It may lead to the U.S. withdrawing support for Pakistan's financing through the IMF, World Bank, or other international institutions, the consequences for Pakistan would be severe. Such a scenario could severely restrict Pakistan's ability to secure essential financial assistance, as the U.S. holds substantial influence over these international financial institutions. Without IMF or World Bank backing, Pakistan could face immediate financial instability, including rapid currency devaluation, depletion of foreign reserves, and difficulties in servicing external debt. Should U.S. allies join sanctions, the cumulative impact on Pakistan would be considerably more severe. Economically, coordinated sanctions or restrictions could sharply reduce Pakistan's access to international markets, financial services, and foreign investment, amplifying economic instability and further deteriorating currency value. If diplomatic tensions escalate to the point of severely impacting military cooperation between Pakistan and the United States, Pakistan's armed forces—including the Army, Air Force, and Navy—could face significant operational and strategic challenges. The Pakistani military relies heavily on American technology, training, spare parts, and logistical support, particularly in its Air Force, which operates a fleet

largely composed of American-built F-16 fighter jets. Without continuous technical support, spare parts, or maintenance assistance, the readiness and effectiveness of these aircraft would be severely compromised. Similarly, the Pakistani Army's capabilities in areas like surveillance, counterterrorism, and armored warfare could decline, given its reliance on U.S.-supplied equipment and joint training programs. The Navy would also experience reduced operational effectiveness, as maritime surveillance, coastal defense systems, and equipment upgrades often depend upon U.S. technical cooperation and support. Overall, the deterioration in military relations could impair Pakistan's defense readiness, hinder counterterrorism operations, and reduce strategic deterrence capabilities. There is precedent for such actions. The U.S. imposed the Magnitsky Act in 2012 on Russia for human rights abuses, leading to strained relations. In 2020, the U.S. passed the Hong Kong Autonomy Act against China, resulting in retaliatory sanctions and a deepened diplomatic rift. Sanctions were also imposed on Saudi officials post-Khashoggi, though the Crown Prince was spared for strategic reasons. After Myanmar's 2021 coup, the U.S. froze assets and sanctioned military leaders, though the regime remained in control. Given the deep strategic alignment between the United States and the Pakistani military—particularly the reliance on Pakistan's armed forces as a crucial regional asset for counterterrorism operations, intelligence sharing, and diplomatic engagement with Afghanistan—the probability that the U.S. President would ultimately sign the Pakistan Democracy Act into law appears relatively low. Washington recognizes that destabilizing Pakistan, especially considering the sensitive nature of its nuclear arsenal and recent cooperative actions, such as the handing over of key terrorists to U.S. authorities, poses substantial security risks to both regional and global stability. Consequently, despite congressional momentum and symbolic pressure for democratic reforms, pragmatic security considerations, entrenched military ties, and concerns about inadvertently fueling regional extremism and nuclear insecurity suggest that the President will likely exercise diplomatic caution and restraint, favoring alternative avenues for encouraging democratic accountability without rupturing vital strategic partnerships.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister at Embassy
of Pakistan to France
Former MD, SRBC

The silent grief of martyrs' families

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



This Hadith not only highlights the high status of martyrs in Islam but also reminds us of our responsibility to support their families. Their sacrifice is not just the ultimate test for them but also a challenge for those they leave behind. We have nothing to repay for these unparalleled emotions. The selflessness of their sacrifice is priceless...

EID is undoubtedly a festival of happiness, a day of celebration and gratitude after a month of fasting. It is a time for families to come together, for laughter to echo in homes, and for loved ones to exchange warm greetings. However, amid the joyous atmosphere, there are countless homes where silence replaces laughter, where memories fill the space left by those who once celebrated with them. These are the families of martyrs—those who sacrificed their lives to protect this nation, leaving behind parents, spouses, and children who now experience Eid with a deep void in their hearts. In the homes of these martyrs, the festive spirit is overshadowed by the painful absence of their loved ones. Their uniforms, medals, and cherished belongings remain in their rooms as silent reminders of their sacrifice. Every Eid, these items stir emotions too deep to be expressed in words. Mothers, who once prepared special dishes for their sons, now prepare meals with tears in their eyes. Fathers, who once embraced their sons in pride, now sit in quiet remembrance. Wives, who once looked forward to celebrating Eid with their husbands, now struggle with an emptiness that no words can fill. Children, too young to understand the full depth of their loss, still wait at the door, hoping their father will return with gifts, unaware that he has given the greatest gift of all—his life for the nation. A striking example of this sacrifice is the story of Captain Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed (Nisahn-e-Haider). He embraced martyrdom during the Kargil conflict, fighting with unmatched bravery. His mother, despite her immense grief, always expressed pride in his sacrifice.

She once said, "My son was not just mine; he belonged to the entire nation. His sacrifice was not a loss; it was an honor." This sentiment echoes in the hearts of many families who have lost their loved ones in service to Pakistan. Similarly, the family of Aitzaz Hasan, the young boy who sacrificed his life in January 6, 2014 to stop a suicide bomber from attacking his school, spends each Eid in reflection. His father, Mujahid Ali, has often stated, "My son saved hundreds of lives, but he left a void in our home that can never be filled." These are not just stories; they are living examples of the price paid for our peace and security. Islam teaches us to honor those who sacrifice their lives for a just cause. The Holy Quran states "Think not of those who are slain in the way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord." (Surah Aal-e-Imran 3:169) This verse assures us that martyrs are not truly gone; they have attained an eternal life in the hereafter. However, for their families, the separation is a daily struggle. The pain intensifies on occasions like Eid when their absence is most deeply felt. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the honor of martyrdom in many Hadiths. He said "A martyr is given six special blessings: he is forgiven with the first drop of his blood, he is shown his place in Jannah, he is saved from the punishment of the grave, he is kept safe from the Great Terror (Day of Judgment), he is crowned with honor, and he will be allowed to intercede for seventy of his relatives." (Tirmidhi) This Hadith not only highlights the high status of martyrs in Islam but also reminds us of our respon-

sibility to support their families. Their sacrifice is not just the ultimate test for them but also a challenge for those they leave behind. We have nothing to repay for these unparalleled emotions. The selflessness of their sacrifice is priceless, but we as a society must ensure that their families are not left alone in their grief. True celebration of Eid is not just in personal joy but in sharing happiness with others, especially those who struggle with sorrow. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught us that the best among us are those who help others. He said "The most beloved people to Allah are those who are most beneficial to others. And the most beloved deed to Allah is to make a Muslim happy, to remove his troubles, to pay off his debt, or to remove his hunger." (Tabarani) This Hadith serves as a guiding principle for how we should approach Eid. We must reach out to the families of martyrs, visit them, include them in our celebrations, and remind them that they are not alone. Even a simple gesture, a heartfelt Eid greeting, or a small act of kindness can make a difference. As we celebrate Eid with our loved ones, let us take a moment to reflect on the sacrifices that allow us to live in peace. Let us honor the memory of those who have laid down their lives and extend our hands in solidarity to their families. Their loss is our loss, and their pain should be our concern. May Allah grant the martyrs the highest ranks in Jannah and give their families patience and strength. Let us ensure that this Eid is not just a festival of happiness but also a reminder of our responsibility towards those who have given everything for our nation.

Briefs

Top civil-military brass agrees to crush...

FROM PAGE 01
The government will also integrate terrorism awareness into the national curriculum to educate future generations about its dangers. The government's move comes against the backdrop of increased terrorist attacks in the country with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan emerging as the worst-affected provinces. The notable increase in violence in the country lately has ranked it as the second-most terrorism-affected country in 2024, as per a Global Terrorism Index 2025 report. Pakistan — placed at the second spot from its previously fourth position — witnessed an alarming 45% increase in terrorism-related deaths with the total rising from 748 in 2023 to 1,081 in 2024 — one of the steepest surges globally.

All arrangements finalized...

FROM PAGE 01
Tallal Chaudhry, the Federal Secretary for Interior, the Secretary for Kashmir Affairs & SAFFRON, Chief Secretaries and Inspectors General (IGs) of all provinces, the Director General of FIA, the IG of Islamabad Police, the Deputy Commissioner of Islamabad, the Coordinator of the National Action Plan, and representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Law, and security agencies. During the briefing, it was informed that all arrangements for the repatriation of Afghan Citizen Card holders have been completed. A door-to-door awareness campaign is underway, and the mapping of Afghan Citizen Card holders has been finalized. Furthermore, holding centers, food provisions, and healthcare facilities have also been arranged for those returning.

BNP-M proceeds with long...

FROM PAGE 01
Dr Mahrang Baloch and Sammi Deen, as well as the police crackdown on their sit-in in Quetta. In a post on X today, the BNP-M leader said that the peaceful long march had successfully crossed the first obstacle despite blockades by the government along the way. "Law enforcement personnel in plainclothes attempted to provoke our people, but our commitment to a peaceful march remains unwavering," Mengal said, adding that all petrol stations from Khuzdhar to Quetta were sealed in an attempt to deny "access to basic necessities".

Pakistan set to receive...

FROM PAGE 01
The new 28-month deal would support Pakistan's efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Meanwhile, the federal government is set to unveil the 2025-26 budget after extensive consultations with the IMF, according to sources within the Ministry of Finance. An IMF delegation is expected to visit Pakistan in the coming weeks for further discussions, with both virtual and in-person negotiations continuing until the budget's finalisation, the sources said.

Pakistan to present...

FROM PAGE 01
Under the new budget, the federal excise duty on the first sale and purchase of property will be removed, while the existing withholding and income tax rates will remain unchanged. Similarly, the tax rate on property sellers will also stay the same. As per the ongoing IMF agreement, the lender's Executive Board is expected to approve recommendations by late May or June, by which time the budget will already be prepared. However, if Pakistan fails to comply with the agreement, it may lose access to climate-related financial assistance.

Belarusian Sabalenka to face Pegula in Miami final

Sabalenka, a three-time Grand Slam champion, has now reached two finals in succession, having lost to Mirra Andreeva at Indian Wells earlier this month

SPORTS DESK

MIAMI: World number one Aryna Sabalenka will face Jessica Pegula in the Miami Open final on Saturday after teenage sensation Alexandra Eala was beaten in the semi-finals. Belarusian Sabalenka, 26, is yet to drop a set at the tournament and was in fine form as she stormed to a 6-2 6-2 win over sixth seed Jasmine Paolini. Sabalenka, a three-time Grand Slam champion, has now reached two finals in succession, having lost to Mirra Andreeva at Indian Wells earlier this month. Top seed Sabalenka - who has never previously reached the Miami showpiece - delivered a clinical performance on Thursday, dominating Italian Paolini with powerful serves and punishing groundstrokes. Meanwhile, American Pegula ended 19-year-old Eala's remarkable run in Miami with a 7-6 (7-3) 5-7 6-3 victory. Aside from two mistimed overheads and an ambitious 'tweener' shot which did not have enough power to trouble her opponent, Sabalenka barely put a foot wrong as she surged to



victory in just one hour and 13 minutes. "Super happy that I was able to give myself another chance, another final, another opportunity to hold a trophy," Sabalenka said. "She's an incredible player so I knew I would have to work for every point." Sabalenka has reached her fourth final in 2025, winning in Brisbane in January before defeats by American Madison Keys at the Australian Open then by Andreeva at Indian Wells two weeks ago. Filipino Eala, ranked 140th in the world, had only two WTA main draw victories before arriving in Miami, yet she beat three Grand Slam winners in Jelena Ostapenko, Keys and world number two Iga Swiatek on her way to the last four. The lowest-ranked semi-finalist in Miami Open history pushed Pegula to the brink in a contest lasting two hours and 24 minutes, breaking three times to win the second set. "To have a week like this, the stars need to align and they did this week, and hopefully I can keep that up - that is my goal now, to keep this up," she said. Eala, a graduate of the Rafael Nadal Academy, will break into the world's top 100 for the first time next week.

KKR, LSG secure victories in IPL 2025 double-header

The five-wicket victory puts LSG to second in IPL 2025 standings

KARACHI: Defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) and Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) registered thumping victories over Rajasthan Royals and Sunrisers Hyderabad respectively in Thursday's double-header of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025. In the sixth match of the tournament, the holders outclassed inaugural champions Royals by eight wickets, courtesy of Quinton de Kock's unbeaten 97-run knock. Batting first, the Royals only managed to accumulate 151/9 in the allotted overs as a combined bowling effort by the KKR barred them from achieving the desired momentum at any stage. Dhruv Jurel remained their top-scorer with a cautious 33 off 28 deliveries. Opening batter Yashvi Jaiswal and skipper Ryan Parag were their other notable contributors, scoring 29 and 25 respectively.



Ravi Bopara named Karachi Kings' head coach

The franchise also appoints Muhammad Masroor as the High-Performance coach

KARACHI: Former England all-rounder Ravi Bopara has been appointed as the head coach of Karachi Kings for the upcoming 10th edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL). Bopara replaced former West Indies all-rounder Phil Simmons, who coached the former champions for one season. Simmons served as the interim head coach of the Bangladesh cricket team for the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 but the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has now extended his contract until the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2027, resulting in him relinquishing his duties as Kings' coach. Bopara's association with the Kings dates back to the inaugural edition of the marquee league when he represented them as a player until 2019. The all-rounder eventually returned to the side in 2023 as the batting coach and was soon promoted to the assistant coach role last year. "Bopara's deep understanding of the team's dynamics and his extensive experience in T20 cricket make him the ideal choice to lead the side in HBL PSL 10. His leadership and tactical acumen will be crucial as Karachi Kings aim for glory in the new season," the franchise said in a statement. Besides Ravi Bopara, the Kings also entrusted assistant coach Muhammad Masroor with the additional responsibility of High-Performance coaching. The highly anticipated 10th edition of the PSL is set to commence on Friday, April 11, with defending champions Islamabad United taking on two-time winners Lahore Qalandars at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. — DNA

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari warns against changes in net metering policy

Ahsan Bakhtawari has appealed to PM Shehbaz Sharif for immediate intervention in this matter. He stated that Pakistan's economy is already facing difficulties, and any uncertainty in the net metering solarization policy could further harm the country's exports

ISLAMABAD: Member Central Core Committee United Business Group (FPCCI) and Chairman of Azerbaijan-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, has expressed deep concern over the possible changes in the net metering solarization policy by the government. He stated that this move could prove harmful to Pakistan's export sector. He expressed these views today while addressing an Iftar dinner hosted at his residence in honor of prominent figures from the business community. Later, during a discussion with the President of All Pakistan Traders Association, President of Aabpara Market Islamabad, General Secretary Akhtar Abbasi, President of F-10 Markaz Ahmed Khan, Chairman Tahir Abbasi, and others, Ahsan Bakhtawari urged the government to maintain this policy for at least 14 years to protect exporters from uncertainty. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari stated that Pakistan's exporters are already facing serious challenges such as rising production costs, expensive electricity, and international competition. He mentioned that many industrialists have made significant investments in solar energy infrastructure to reduce energy costs and maintain exports at global standards. Any negative change in the net metering policy will not only increase business costs but also affect Pakistan's

export competitiveness. Ahsan Bakhtawari has appealed to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for immediate intervention in this matter. He stated that Pakistan's economy is already facing difficulties, and any uncertainty in the net metering solarization policy could further harm the country's exports. He further emphasized that ensuring long-term stability in this policy would help achieve the \$60 billion export target under the Uraan Pakistan National Economic Transformation Plan. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari pointed out that Pakistan's industrial and business community is already relying on alternative energy sources to cope with the energy crisis. He stated that the government should consult with the business community and formulate policies that enhance industrial productivity rather than harm it. Any unexpected changes to the net metering solarization policy could severely impact Pakistan's exports, shake investor confidence, and further increase business costs. He emphasized the need to maintain this policy to help exporters and the industrial sector reduce costs through alternative energy sources and remain competitive in the global market. He expressed hope that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif would take immediate action on this issue and make a positive decision in the country's economic interest. — DNA

Lahore thump Peshawar to win National T20 Cup

Lahore Blues chase down the 111-run target for the loss of just one wicket

DNA

FAISALABAD: Salman Mirza's four-wicket haul, coupled with Umar Siddiq's unbeaten half-century, steered Lahore Blues to win the National T20 Cup with a commanding nine-wicket victory over Peshawar in the final here at the Iqbal Stadium on Thursday. Chasing a modest 111, Lahore Blues comfortably knocked the winning runs for the loss of just one wicket and 24 balls to spare. Lahore Blues opens Imran Butt (11) and Siddiq laid a solid foundation for the run chase with a 45-run stand which culminated with the former's dismissal in the seventh over. Siddiq then stitched an unbeaten 66-run partnership with Junaid Ali to lead Lahore Blues to glory. The opening batter top-scored with an unbeaten 64 off 46 deliveries, studded with six fours and two sixes, while Junaid made 30 not out from six innings. For Peshawar, Usman Tariq picked up the

solitary wicket. Peshawar captain Iftikhar Ahmed's decision to bat first backfired as his team's batting unit faltered in the all-important clash and could yield a meagre 110/9 in the allotted overs. The former champions had a shaky start to their innings as they lost opening batter Waqar Ahmed (nine) in the second over with just 10 runs on the board. Peshawar then lost two more wickets in successive overs and slipped further to 26/3 in 3.4 overs. Mohammad Rizwan then inflicted the big-



dent in Peshawar's batting expedition by getting in-form Sahibzada Farhan caught and bowled in the seventh over. Farhan could score 17 off 16 deliveries with the help of one four and a six. Following the blow, skipper Iftikhar and wicketkeeper batter Mohammad Zulkifal attempted to stabilize the innings by putting together an anchoring 38-run partnership for the fifth wicket. The crucial stand culminated in the 13th over with Zulkifal's dismissal, who scored 32 off 29 deliveries, laced with five boundaries including a six. His dismissal sparked a match-defining middle-order collapse which saw Peshawar losing three more wickets in quick succession but Iftikhar stood his ground firm until the penultimate over, which saw him being dismissed by Nisar Ahmed. He remained the top-scorer for his side with a 33-ball 34, featuring two fours. Salman Mirza was the standout bowler for Lahore Blues, taking four wickets for just 21 runs in his four overs, followed by Mohammad Irfan with two scalps, while Qasim Akram, Nisar and Rizwan struck out one batter apiece.

Pakistan to launch Panda Bonds this...

FROM PAGE 01
lower electricity tariffs. Earlier this week, the minister had said that Islamabad planned to issue Panda Bonds in Yuan this year to access China's vast and deep capital market. During his interview with Chinese media outlets, including CGTN English and China Daily, the finance minister said on Wednesday that Pakistan had previously issued bonds in US dollars and Euros, and now is the time to benefit from the Chinese capital market. The issuance of Panda Bonds will connect Pakistan's capital markets with China and reflect China's important role in Pakistan's digital transformation, he said and thanked China for its consistent support, referring to Pakistan and China as "iron brothers" and strategic partners. It is pertinent to mention that the minister is visiting China, to participate in the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2025. Aurangzeb praised China's efforts to open up its economy and markets, highlighting the significant role of foreign companies and firms in China's exports. He emphasised Pakistan's desire to become a hub for the transfer of export-oriented facilities and services from foreign, especially Chinese, companies. The minister also commended the construction of communication infrastructure, roads, and ports in Pakistan under the CPEC project.

Govt seeks Rs 1.71 per unit cut in...

FROM PAGE 01
through an increase in the tariff differential subsidy. The request recommends that the reduction apply to all distribution companies, including K-Electric, for the period from April to June 2025. However, lifeline domestic consumers will not be covered under this adjustment. Nepra has scheduled a hearing on the government's petition for April 4. If approved, the federal government will provide a subsidy of Rs1.71 per unit to electricity consumers for April to June. It may be noted that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a reduction of Re1 per unit in electricity tariffs, providing relief to all consumers on Thursday. The tariff relief, as per IMF officials, will be extended to all electricity users and will be financed through revenue generated from the levy imposed on captive power plants using gas. The development follows the staff-level agreement (SLA) reached between the Washington-based lender and Pakistani authorities concerning the first review of the ongoing 37-month bailout programme.

Powerful quake in Southeast...

FROM PAGE 01
The United States Geological Survey (USGS) said the quake, which struck at lunchtime, was of 7.7 magnitude and at a depth of 10 km (6.2 miles). The epicentre was about 17.2 km from the Myanmar city of Mandalay, which has a population of about 1.5 million. The quake was followed by a powerful aftershock and several more moderate ones. In Myanmar, the quake caused the collapse of buildings in five cities and towns, as well as a railway bridge and a road bridge on the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway, state media said. "We all ran out of the house as everything started shaking," a resident in Mandalay told Reuters. "I witnessed a five-storey building collapse in front of my eyes. Everyone in my town is out on the road and no one dares to go back inside buildings."

COURT NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF DANIAL AMJID GONDAL CIVIL/FAMILY JUDGE RAWALPINDI
Suit for recovery of maintenance etc Mst. Aneesa Sagheer etc. Versus Imran Hanif Notice to Imran Hanif S/o Muhammad Hanif R/o near khattak karyana store, Street No. 07/8, Khalid Colony, Phase 2, Chakri Road Rawalpindi, The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the court personally, through counsel or attorney on 07-04-2025 at 9 am avoid ex-parte proceeding.

Briefs

Rupee gains
05 paise
against US
Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Friday gained 05 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 280.16 against the previous day's closing of Rs 280.21. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 280.40 and Rs 281.90, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by 81 paise to close at Rs 302.42 against the last day's closing of Rs 301.61, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.86, whereas an increase of Rs 1.15 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 362.96 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 361.81. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham decreased by 02 paise and closed at Rs 76.27 and Saudi Riyal remained stagnant and closed at Rs 74.69.—APP

KSA's job
market
strengthens
in 2024

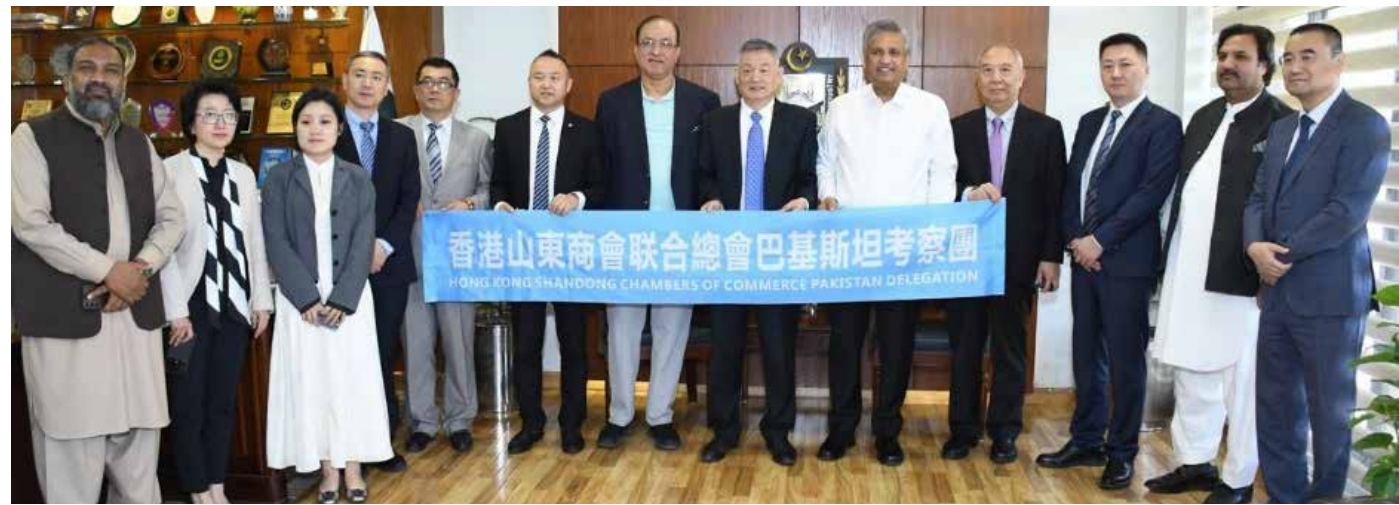
JEDDAH: Saudi Arabia's unemployment rate for nationals in the fourth quarter of 2024 reached 7 percent, marking a decrease of 0.8 percentage points compared to both the previous quarter and the same period last year, official data showed. The data, released by the General Authority for Statistics, indicate a slight increase in the employment-to-population ratio for nationals, suggesting continued progress in the creation of job opportunities for the Kingdom's growing workforce. Although the overall labor force participation rate experienced modest declines, these figures underscore Saudi Arabia's ongoing efforts to achieve the ambitious goals set forth in Vision 2030, particularly in terms of enhancing job creation and driving economic growth. The improvement in the labor market is a critical component of Vision 2030, which aims to generate employment opportunities for Saudis while stimulating broader economic development. Strengthening the labor market remains a key pillar of the Kingdom's long-term socio-economic strategy. The Labor Force Survey revealed that the overall unemployment rate for both Saudi nationals and non-Saudis reached 3.5 percent in Q4 2024, showing a decrease of 0.2 percentage points compared to the previous quarter. However, the figure marked a slight increase of 0.1 percentage points from Q4 2023. The overall labor force participation rate for both Saudis and non-Saudis stood at 66.4 percent, a decrease of 0.2 percentage points from Q3 2024 and a 0.6 percentage point decline year on year. Meanwhile, the employment-to-population ratio for Saudi nationals rose by 0.1 percentage points to 47.5 percent, reflecting a 1.0 percentage point increase from Q4 2023. However, the labor force participation rate for Saudis decreased by 0.4 percentage points to 51.1 percent, although this still represented a 0.7 percentage point increase compared to the previous year. For Saudi females, the labor force participation rate decreased by 0.2 percentage points to 36 percent. Nevertheless, their employment-to-population ratio improved by 0.5 percentage points to 31.8 percent, and their unemployment rate dropped by 1.7 percentage points to 11.9 percent compared to the previous quarter. Conversely, Saudi males experienced a 0.7 percentage point decrease in their labor force participation rate, which fell to 66.2 percent. Their employment-to-population ratio also declined, reaching 63.4 percent. However, the unemployment rate for Saudi males decreased to 4.3 percent compared to Q3 2024.—APP

ICCI, Chinese delegation
explore new avenues for trade

President Qureshi stressed the benefits of manufacturing export-quality goods and providing technical training to enhance local skills, which would also create employment opportunities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high-level 10-member delegation from the Hong Kong Shandong Chamber of Commerce Pakistan visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Friday to explore avenues for trade and investment cooperation in Pakistan. During its meeting with ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, and Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, the Chinese delegation expressed strong interest in fostering business collaboration, particularly in the medical equipment sector. The Chinese representatives described Pakistan as a promising market and expressed their intention to introduce their products for mutual benefit. They praised the hospitality and cooperation extended by their Pakistani counterparts, emphasizing their commitment to strengthening business ties. Welcoming the



delegation, ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi briefed the visitors about ICCI's role as the apex chamber of the capital, representing 15,000 entrepreneurs from the industry, trade, and services sectors. He highlighted Pakistan's rich export potential, including resources such as mines and minerals, gemstones, marble,

pink salt, and pharmaceuticals. President Qureshi encouraged the Chinese investors to invest in upgrading Pakistan's industrial infrastructure, stressing the benefits of manufacturing export-quality goods and providing technical training to enhance local skills, which would also create employment opportunities.

"Chinese investors can utilize Pakistan as a strategic hub for manufacturing and exporting their products to global markets," Mr. Qureshi stated. "By collaborating through joint ventures, we can unlock immense growth potential for both sides." Both parties agreed to strengthen ties through enhanced communication, delega-

tion exchanges, and virtual meetings. Plans were also discussed to organize exhibitions showcasing their respective products to further promote trade and investment opportunities. The visit concluded on a positive note, with both sides committed to fostering deeper economic collaboration for mutual prosperity.

White paper
highlights HRs
progress in Xizang

The CPC has maintained a people-centered approach to human rights and a commitment to ensuring human rights through development, and has vigorously promoted whole-process people's democracy, it said

BEIJING: All-round and historic progress has been made in human rights cause in southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region, according to a white paper released on Friday. The document, titled "Human Rights in Xizang in the New Era," was released by the State Council Information Office at a press conference held in Lhasa, capital city of the region. The Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese government have implemented effective measures to develop the economy, improve living standards and people's wellbeing, promote ethnic unity and progress, and protect the basic rights of all the people in the region, it said. Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, respecting and protecting human rights has been made an important part of the Party Central Committee's guidelines for the governance of the region, according to the document. The CPC has maintained a people-centered approach to human rights and a commitment to ensuring human rights through development, and has vigorously promoted whole-process people's democracy, it said. The Party has strengthened legal protection of human rights, and coordinated efforts to increase people's civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights, so as to achieve well-rounded development and common prosperity for all people from all ethnic groups, according to the white paper. Today, Xizang enjoys political stability, ethnic unity, economic development, social harmony, and amity among different religions, the document said. Its environment is sound, and local people are content with their work and daily lives. This progress represents a remarkable achievement in protecting human rights on the snowy plateau, it said.—DNA

Israeli strike on south
Beirut, first since
ceasefire

DUBAI: Lebanese official media reported an air strike Friday on south Beirut following an Israeli military warning, the first such raid since a November ceasefire largely halted hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. "Israeli warplanes struck the Hadath neighbourhood in Beirut's southern suburbs," the National News Agency said, referring to a densely populated area home to residential buildings and schools, after unclaimed rocket fire from Lebanon towards Israel earlier in the day. The Israeli military said on Friday it was striking Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon, hours after missiles were fired from Lebanese territory into Israel. The army said it would provide further details later. Israel earlier said Friday it had intercepted a projectile launched from Lebanon and vowed to respond strongly to protect its security, the latest strains to a shaky truce that ended a yearlong war between Israel and Lebanese armed group Hezbollah. Defense Minister Israel Katz said Israel holds Lebanon responsible for missile fire on the Galilee area in northern Israel. "We will ensure the security of the residents of Galilee and will act forcefully against any threat," he said in a statement. A second projectile landed inside Lebanon, the Israeli military said. There was no immediate comment from the Lebanese government or from Hezbollah. Israeli artillery and airstrikes hit southern Lebanon on Saturday after Israel said it intercepted rockets fired from across the border, killing at least eight people. Hezbollah denied responsibility for the rocket fired on Saturday, saying it had "no link" to the launches and remained committed to the ceasefire. Under a ceasefire deal agreed in November, Hezbollah was to remove its weapons from southern Lebanon, Israeli ground forces were to withdraw, and the Lebanese army was to deploy in the area. The agreement tasked Lebanon's government with dismantling military infrastructure in the south and confiscating unauthorized weapons.—DNA

Industrial sector reforms
to drive sustainable,
export-led growth

Together, these efforts aim to drive export-led growth, ensure affordable access to essential goods, and strengthen Pakistan's industrial base for long-term economic development

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Industries and Production (MoIP) has successfully implemented key reforms to drive sustainable and export-led growth under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif during the past one year. Over the past year, it introduced a series of groundbreaking reforms aimed at achieving growth in Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) and engineering sectors, expanding industrial infrastructure and ensuring availability of affordable goods for low-income groups, according to an official report available with APP. The ministry has made significant progress in enhancing the competitiveness of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), with increased access to support services, funding, and market linkages, contributing to sustainable growth within the national economy. The Engineering Development Board (EDB) successfully implemented policy reforms to strengthen the engineering sector, boosting both domestic market localization and export capabilities. EDB also facilitated greater integration of the sector into global markets, enhancing its role as a key economic driver. The Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC) played a pivotal role in advancing the development of industrial infrastructure, including the successful establishment and operationalization of several new Special Economic Zones (SEZs), attracting investments and fostering industrial growth. The ministry focused efforts led to an increase in export-oriented industrial activities, aligning with the government's mandate to promote export-led growth, especially within environmentally efficient industries. The ministry implemented policies that ensured essential items remained accessible at affordable prices, directly benefiting lower-income groups and contributing to the protection of real income in the country. Sharing future strategic vision, the official report said the ministry aims to foster a globally competitive SME sector, driving sustainable national economic growth through a supportive environment and targeted services. It said key agencies like EDB and PIDC played vital roles in this vision while EDB facilitates the growth of the engineering sector by providing techno-economic support and fostering localization and export competitiveness. The report said PIDC focuses on creating industrial infrastructure, particularly through the development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), to support industrial growth and create a favorable environment for diverse industries. Together, these efforts aim to drive export-led growth, ensure affordable access to essential goods, and strengthen Pakistan's industrial base for long-term economic development.—DNA

UAE unveils new dirham
symbol and digital currency

RIYADH: The Central Bank of the UAE on Thursday introduced a new symbol for the nation's currency, both in its physical and digital forms, marking a significant step in reinforcing the UAE's status as a leading global financial center. According to the Emirates News Agency or WAM, the newly unveiled dirham symbol draws inspiration from the English letter "D" and features two horizontal lines that represent financial stability. The design is also a nod to the UAE flag, symbolizing national pride and resilience. This symbol will serve as a global representation of the dirham, promoting the UAE's currency across inter-

national markets. The launch of the symbol coincides with the UAE's adoption of the FX Global Code, which positions the CBUAE as the first central bank in the Arab region to join this important framework. The FX Global Code is renowned for promoting best practices and ethical standards within the foreign exchange market, and this step further enhances the UAE's commitment to integrity and transparency in financial dealings. Alongside the physical dirham symbol, the CBUAE is advancing the issuance and circulation of the digital dirham, a core initiative of the Financial Infrastructure Transformation

Program launched in 2023. The digital dirham will feature a circular design, incorporating the UAE flag's colors, which reinforces the nation's sense of pride and modernity in the evolving financial landscape. Khaled Mohamed Balama, governor of the CBUAE, expressed his enthusiasm for these transformative steps: "We are proud to unveil today the new symbol for the UAE's national currency and the design of the digital dirham wallet," he stated. "The digital dirham, built on blockchain technology, is expected to enhance financial stability, improve inclusion, increase resilience, and help combat financial

crime." He further emphasized that the digital dirham is set to drive innovation in the financial sector by enabling the creation of new digital products and services, while lowering costs and expanding access to international markets. The digital dirham will be made available through licensed financial institutions, including banks, exchange houses, fintech firms, and other financial services providers. It will be legally recognized as a universal payment method, alongside physical currency, creating a seamless experience for both digital and traditional transactions. To support the digital currency,

the CBUAE has developed a robust and secure platform for its issuance and circulation. This platform includes a user-friendly digital dirham wallet, designed to handle a wide range of financial transactions, including retail and wholesale payments, cross-border transfers, withdrawals, and top-ups. It also ensures ease of access and a convenient user experience, adhering to industry best practices. As the UAE continues to lead in the digital economy, the digital dirham platform is designed to adapt to emerging financial needs, facilitating innovative solutions and reinforcing the country's position as a global leader in digital payments.—Agencies

Powerful
earthquakes
rock
Thailand,
Myanmar

BANGKOK: A high-rise building under construction in Bangkok collapsed after a 7.7 magnitude earthquake rocked Thailand and neighboring Myanmar midday on Friday, police said, and possible casualties are not yet known. A dramatic video circulated on social media showed the multi-story building with a crane on top collapsing into a cloud of dust, while onlookers screamed and ran. Police told The Associated Press they were responding to the scene near Bangkok's popular Chatuchak Market, and had no immediate information on how many workers were on the site at the time of the collapse.

The midday tremor was followed by a strong 6.4 magnitude aftershock, and people in Bangkok evacuated from their buildings were cautioned to stay outside in case there were more. "All of a sudden the whole building began to move, immediately there was screaming and a lot of panic," said Fraser Morton, a tourist from Scotland, who was in one of Bangkok's many malls shopping for camera equipment. "I just started walking calmly at first but then the building started really moving, yeah, a lot of screaming, a lot of panic, people running the wrong way down the escalators, lots of banging and crashing inside the mall." Like thousands of others in downtown Bangkok, Morton sought refuge in Benjasi Park — away from the tall buildings all around. "I got outside and then looked up at the building and the whole building was moving, dust and debris, it was pretty intense," he said. "Lots of chaos." The US Geological Survey and Germany's GFZ center for geosciences said the earthquake was a shallow 10 kilometers (6.2 miles), with an epicenter in Myanmar, according to preliminary reports.—Agencies

UK govt
warns Britons
to leave S
Sudan now

LONDON: British citizens "should leave South Sudan now," UK foreign minister David Lammy has warned, with fears growing the country is tipping closer to civil war as a fragile peace deal unravels. "My message to British nationals in South Sudan is clear. If you judge it is safe to do so — leave now," Lammy said on X late Thursday, as the foreign ministry updated its travel warning for the country. The message comes after Wednesday's arrest of First Vice President Riek Machar, a long-time rival to President Salva Kiir, which observers warn could throw the country back into war. A power-sharing deal between Kiir and Machar has been gradually unraveling, risking a return of the civil war that killed around 400,000 people between 2013 and 2018. Lammy said: "South Sudan's leaders must make efforts to de-escalate. A descent into violence and conflict is in no-one's interests." In its updated travel advice, the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) said British nationals who chose to remain in the country did so "at your own risk." "You should have a personal emergency plan that does not rely on the UK government," it added, warning Britons they "should not assume that the FCDO will be able to provide assistance... in the event of serious unrest." South Sudan — which declared independence from Sudan in 2011 — has remained plagued by poverty and insecurity since the 2018 peace deal. Regional powers have scrambled to mediate in the latest crisis, with Kenyan President William Ruto posting that he had spoken to Kiir about Machar's arrest. Analysts say the aging Kiir, 73, has been seeking to ensure his succession and sideline Machar politically for months through cabinet reshuffles. More than 20 of Machar's political and military allies in the unity government and army have also been arrested since February, many held incommunicado.—APP

UNICEF warns
825,000 kids trapped
in Darfur battle

NEW YORK: At least 825,000 Sudanese children are trapped by fighting around the beleaguered state capital of North Darfur, threatened by violence or starvation, UNICEF has warned. "We cannot turn a blind eye to this hell on earth," said Sheldon Yett, the UN children's agency representative for Sudan, demanding an end to the conflict. "An estimated 825,000 children are trapped in a growing catastrophe in and around Al-Fasher," said Yett, adding that more than 70 children have been killed or maimed this year. "With these numbers reflecting only verified incidents, it is likely the true toll is far higher, with children in a daily struggle to survive," he said. In North Darfur, more than 60,000 people have been displaced in the past six weeks, adding to the more than 600,000 displaced — including 300,000 children — since the war started in April 2023. A few weeks ago, Doctors Without Borders, or MSF, and the UN World Food Programme suspended their work in a vast displaced people's camp in Zamzam, just south of Al-Fasher. UNICEF, however, continues to operate there and in the city itself, but food supplies are expected to run out within weeks. "UNICEF delivered ready-to-use therapeutic food, or RUTF and other lifesaving supplies to Al-Fasher three months ago, but these stocks are now depleted," Yett said. "Repeated efforts by UNICEF and partners to deliver more supplies have been unsuccessful given threats from armed fighters and criminal gangs.—APP

Briefs

Court grants bail to detained journalist

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: A local court in Islamabad has approved the post-arrest bail application of journalist Waheed Murad, who was arrested by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on charges of glorifying offences and cyber terrorism earlier this week. Judicial Magistrate Abbas Shah ordered the release of the journalist on bail after the FIA presented him in the court on completion of his two-day physical remand. Initially, the court had set surety bonds at Rs50,000, however, Murad's plea for a reduction was accepted, and the amount was lowered to Rs20,000. Murad had been taken into custody on Tuesday night from his residence where his mother-in-law was also residing after being named in an FIA case related to spreading fake news. His wife initially reported that masked men in black uniforms forcibly entered their house at around 2am and whisked him away in a black "dala", alleging him of being an Afghan. Later, a petition was filed for the missing journalist's recovery via Advocates Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chahtha. The interior secretary, defence secretary, Islamabad inspector general of police, and SHO of Karachi Company police station had been named as respondents in the plea. The FIA registered a case against the journalist under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA). The sections include 9 (glorification of an offence), 10 (cyber terrorism), 20 (malicious code), and 26. The court had remanded him to the FIA custody for two days after the agency produced him after the arrest.

Australia to hold federal election on 3 May

CANBERRA: Australia will head to the polls for a federal election on 3 May, in what is predicted to be a tight race. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, whose Labor Party will be defending a small majority, announced the date from Parliament House on Friday. Opinion polls predict a slim margin between the country's two major parties, and the possibility either will have to work with independent MPs or minor parties - which combined won a record share of the vote at the last election - to form the next government. The campaign is expected to be dominated by cost-of-living issues, and Labor is fighting to avoid becoming the first single-term government to lose an election in almost a century. In a press conference on Friday morning, Albanese reiterated his pledge to address the cost of living - having already unveiled plans to provide more free healthcare, cut student debt and deliver small tax cuts. - Agencies

Fatemi urges US to view Pak sans any foreign lens

Fatemi 'very satisfied' over first contact with Trump admin officials and talks with Congressional leaders

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Syed Tariq Fatemi, highlighting the strategic significance of Pakistan, urged the United States to view the country independently rather than through any foreign or regional lens. The special assistant, addressing a prominent American think tank Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington on Thursday, during his US visit, also emphasized the need for deeper Pak-US economic relations and enhanced US investment. Tariq Fatemi is visiting London, New York and Washington, where he has held bilateral meetings. He met the Secretary General of the Commonwealth in London and held important meetings with key leaders of US Congress in the United States. Highlighting Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's efforts to boost trade and investment, he mentioned key economic achievements, including a significant reduction in inflation, successful staff-level negotiations with the IMF, and a \$20 billion World Bank package for Pakistan. He pointed out that terrorist sanctuaries in Afghanistan had been fanning terrorism in Pakistan. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to regional peace, underscoring the challenges posed by the neighboring countries. SAPM Fatemi apprised the gathering of the advantages of Pakistan-China bilateral economic cooperation, particularly the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) for the country and the region. Highlight-

ing the trade opportunities in Pakistan, he called for increased US investment in Pakistan's textile industry, infrastructure, and human capital development. He said that Pakistan was rich with immense mineral wealth and that the US companies should capitalise on the available opportunities, besides underlining the Special Investment Facilitation Council's crucial role to facilitate the business community. The special assistant also spoke about Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts, border control measures, and initiatives to ensure a stable environment for investors and reaffirmed that Pakistan remained a promising and profitable destination for foreign investment. Fatemi also urged the US to support Pakistan in education, healthcare, and economic development to transform bilateral cooperation into a long-term partnership for the mutual benefit of the two nations. Syed Tariq Fatemi said he was "very satisfied" over his talks in Washington with key US officials and Congressional leaders in what he described as the first high-level contact with the Trump administration. "I had very good response both from the State Department and at Capitol Hill - the meetings were productive," he told UN correspondents in a news briefing at the Pakistan Mission to the United Nations on Thursday. Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to the UN, Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, was also present. Fatemi said he was sent by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to get a sense of the Trump administration's priorities for the South Asian region. In turn, he said he briefed his interlocutors about Prime Minister Shehbaz's focus on boosting economic growth,

trade and investment to make the lives of Pakistani people better as well as to enhance cooperation with all the big powers in an effort to achieve those objectives. "We look forward to engaging with the Trump Administration on areas of mutual benefit" in an effort to further strengthen US-Pakistan relations. During his two-day visit to the US capital, the Special Assistant met with Senior Bureau Official/Acting Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Lisa Kenna and Senior Director for South and Central Asia National Security Council Ricky Gill. He also met with Ranking Member Congressman Gregory Meeks, Chairman of the Sub-Committee on South and Central Asia, Congressman Bill Huizenga of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senator Jim Banks. The special assistant said Pakistan's population of 240 million and its youth bulge were important assets capable of driving national development as well as their role in the key IT sector. Fatemi said that Pakistan government had worked hard to stabilize the country's economy and put it on the path of growth. Inflation was down from 33 percent to just 1.5 percent, a feat achieved in one year. He also highlighted the recent staff level agreement with IMF for a new loan and the World Bank's \$20 billion investment in Pakistan over ten years. The recognition of the improvement of economic indicators by the IMF and the World Bank was a proof that the economy was moving in the right direction, he added. The special assistant said that there exists immense potential for promoting trade and economic relations between Pakistan and the US - not only

benefiting the businesses of both countries but will also have a positive impact on the economy of the region. He also said that significant agreements in the areas of economy, trade and investment will be concluded with UAE and Saudi Arabia in coming months. Fatemi said that the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has been set up to provide one-window operation to facilitate investors. Replying to a question, he said China was Pakistan's "trusted friend" - the two countries have had close relations despite the change of governments on both sides amid challenging international environment. China continues to be an important development and strategic partner of Pakistan, Fatemi said. While maintaining its close friendship with China, he said Pakistan can also have good relations with the United States. About the rise of terrorist attacks in Pakistan, he said they were being conducted by TTP and other terrorist groups based in Afghanistan. Those outfits now have sophisticated weapons left behind by the departing American troops as the Taliban closed in on Kabul in 2021. The special assistant said that Pakistan remains committed to upholding the UN-promised right of self-determination of Kashmiris and Palestinians. The Security Council, he said, must ensure the realization of that right for the Kashmiri people, and promote a just and lasting settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, Expressing his outrage over the slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza, Fatemi backed the internally endorsed two-state solution to usher in peace and stability in the Middle East.

Lebanon, Syria ink deal after border clashes

RIYADH: Syria and Lebanon signed an agreement emphasizing the strategic importance of demarcating the borders between the two countries, Al Ekhbariya reported early on Friday. The defense ministers of Lebanon and Syria met in Jeddah on Thursday to coordinate and enhance cooperation on security and military issues. The Syrian delegation was headed by Murhaf Abu Qasra and the Lebanese delegation was led by Michel Menassa. The sides will form legal and specialized committees in a number of fields, and will activate bilateral coordination mechanisms to deal with security and military challenges, especially those that may arise on the border area. Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman, who facilitated the talks, said he hoped the agreement marks a new phase in relations between the two neighbors. The ministers expressed satisfaction with the discussion and agreed to hold a follow-up meeting in Saudi Arabia. Border tensions flared up earlier in March after the new authorities in Syria accused Lebanese armed group Hezbollah of kidnapping three soldiers into Lebanon and killing them. The Iran-backed group, which fought alongside the forces of toppled Syrian president Bashar Assad, denied involvement. - Agencies

IHC: Power struggle deepens as J. Sattar recuses from case

Justice Sattar, raised questions over the acting chief justice's authority

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: A fresh controversy emerged in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) over the case transfer issue, pitting Acting Chief Justice Sarfraz Dogar against fellow judges. In an administrative order issued by the acting chief justice, it was stated that Justice Babar Sattar had recused himself from hearing a particular case. However, the acting chief justice subsequently directed the same bench, led by Justice Sattar, to proceed with the hearing. Justice Sattar, raising questions over the acting chief justice's authority, issued a judicial order and directed the deputy registrar to assign the case to a new bench. In his written order, Justice Sattar noted that on March 14, the court had referred the case to another bench. However, possibly due to an error,

the case file was returned to his court, accompanied by administrative remarks from the chief justice's office stating that the same bench would hear the matter. Justice Sattar observed that the return of the case file was likely a mistake on the part of the chief justice's office or the registrar's staff. He asserted that the chief justice did not have the authority to determine whether a particular court must hear a case. According to court rules, a judge has the discretion to recuse from a case once it has been assigned to a bench. The order further stated that neither the chief justice's office nor the registrar's office had any role in intervening if a judge opted to recuse from a hearing. Under the rules, the scheduling of urgent and routine cases falls under the deputy registrar's jurisdiction, while the chief justice's role is limited to approving the roster of benches prepared by the deputy registrar. Justice Sattar's court clarified that once a case has been assigned based on the approved roster, the chief justice plays no role in scheduling it.

US defence secy under fire with 'Islamophobic' tattoo

WASHINGTON: US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth has once again drawn controversy and backlash over his new tattoo which spells "kafir" (infidel), which many say is Islamophobic, various international media outlets reported on Friday. Hegseth posted pictures on his X account where he joined the US Navy's SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team One at a base in Pearl Harbour in Hawaii on Wednesday. One of the pictures showed a new tattoo on his arm that reads "kafir", which according to Turkish outlet TRT World is the Arabic word for infidel or disbeliever. Activists and experts have argued that the tattoo is an Islamophobic symbol from the man over-seeing the US military. "Hegseth just got a kafir tattoo under his Deus Vult tattoo - a Crusader slogan. This isn't just a personal choice; it's a clear symbol of Islamophobia from the man overseeing US wars," Nerdeen Kiswani, a Palestinian activist, said on X. "Kafir" has been weaponised by far-right Islamophobes to mock and vilify Muslims," she added. - Agencies

Court rejects journalist Farhan Mallick's bail plea

Judicial Magistrate (East) heard bail petition filed by senior journalist, who was arrested under Peca law

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: A local court on Friday dismissed the bail plea of journalist Farhan Mallick in the case pertaining to alleged violation of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca). The Judicial Magistrate (East) was hearing the bail petition filed by the journalist, who was arrested for allegedly spreading anti-state content. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) took the journalist into custody on March 20 for allegedly violating the Peca and involvement in defamation. The contentious Peca law was recently amended, and journalist bodies across the country have been protesting the law, dubbing it an attempt to gag freedom of speech and intimidate newsmen and their media outlets. An FIR was lodged against Mallick under multiple sections of the Peca Act read with Pakistan Penal Code's Section 190 (punishment of abetment if the act abetted is committed in consequence and where no express provision is made for its punishment) and 500 (punishment for defamation). The FIR mentioned that Mallick, who worked for a private news channel as its director news and now owns a YouTube channel, was allegedly involved in disseminating anti-state content. "During the course of [i]nquiry, initial technical analysis of the alleged YouTube Channel was received, which revealed that the alleged person is involved in generating and disseminating posts and videos related to anti-state, consisting of fake news and public incitement agenda," the FIR mentioned.

Putin floats idea of UN-led government in Ukraine

MOSCOW: Vladimir Putin has suggested that Ukraine should temporarily be placed under UN control to elect what he called a more "competent" government. It is the latest attempt by the Russian president to challenge the legitimacy of the Kyiv government. Ukraine accused Putin of proposing "crazy" ideas to delay further movement towards a peace deal - being championed by US President Donald Trump. The White House insisted Ukraine's governance would be decided by its constitution and people. Putin's remarks come as the US seeks to broker a ceasefire in the full-scale war with Ukraine, now into its fourth year. On Tuesday the White House said the two sides had agreed to a limited truce in the Black Sea. But Russia then put forward a list of conditions including lifting of some

Western sanctions, prompting concerns that Moscow was trying to derail any moves towards a ceasefire. Speaking to the crew of a nuclear-powered submarine in the far north Russian city of Murmansk, Putin said a temporary administration under the auspices of the UN could be discussed "with the United States, with European countries, and of course with our partners and friends". "This would be in order to hold democratic elections, to bring to power a capable government trusted by the people and then to begin with it talks on a peace agreement and sign legitimate documents," he added. Moscow says the current Ukrainian authorities are illegitimate as President Volodymyr Zelensky has stayed in power beyond the end of his term and is therefore not a valid negotiating partner. - Agencies

Millions march on Quds Day to support Palestinians

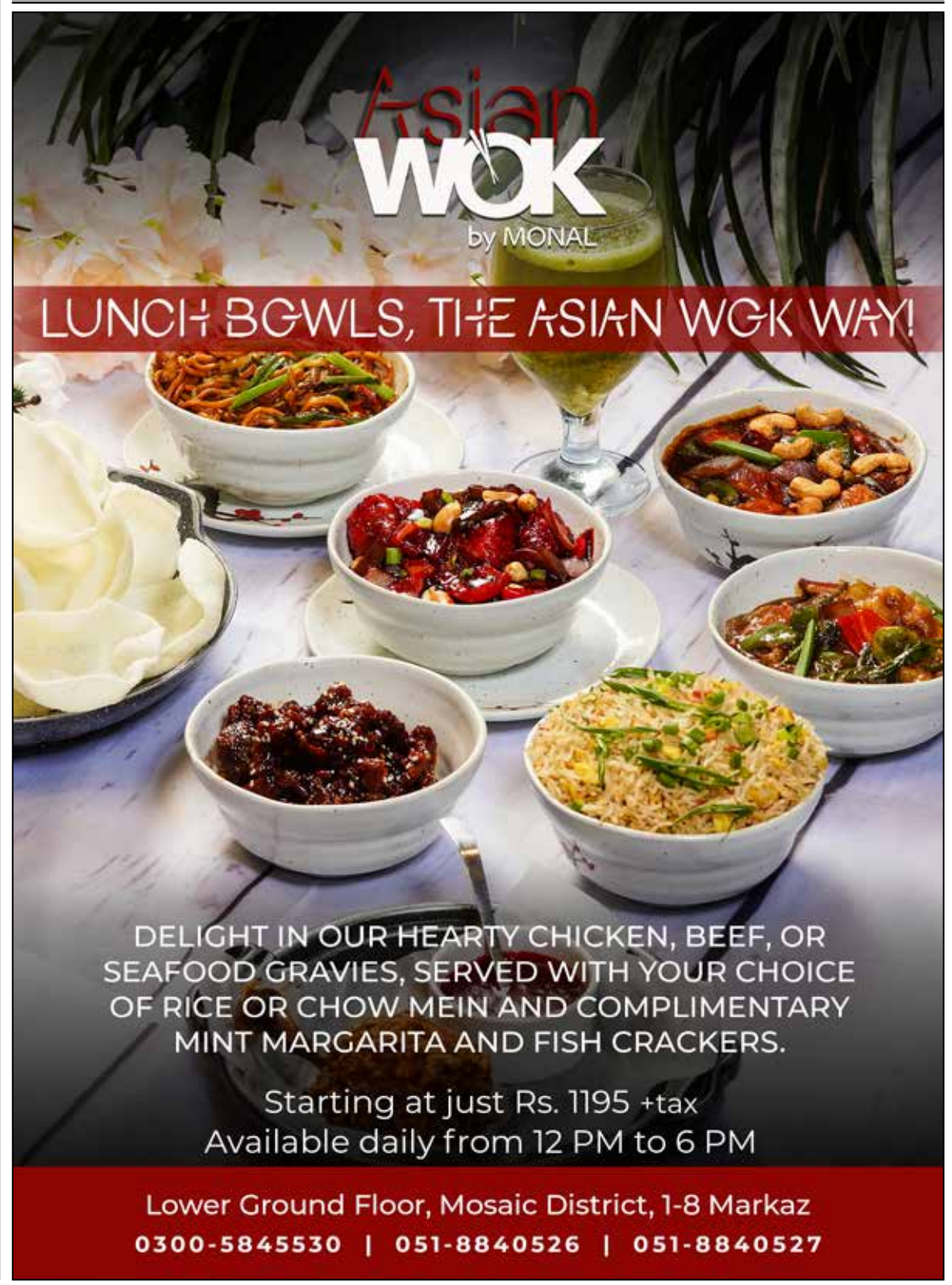
The mass rallies are held in many countries in the West Asian region, including Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon, as well as many others across the globe

NEW DESK

TEHRAN/SANA'A: Millions of people in Iran and across the world have taken to the streets to mark the International Quds Day, voicing their solidarity with Palestinians and denouncing Israeli genocide in the besieged Gaza Strip. Brigadier General Ramezan Sharif, the spokesman of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) and the director-general of Intifada committee in Tehran, said the rallies which started at 10:00 a.m. local time (0630 GMT) were being held in more than 900 cities across the country. Millions of Iranians flooded streets nationwide to commemorate International Quds Day, expressing solidarity with Gaza and denouncing Israel's decades-long occupation of Palestine. From different walks of life and various social strata, the demonstrators held the national flags of Iran and Palestine as well as banners that read, "Free Palestine," and "Al-Quds must be liberated." Other flags belonging to regional resistance groups, including Iraq's anti-terror Popular Mobilization Units, better known as Hashd al-Sha'abi, Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement and Yemen's Ansarullah were carried by demonstrators. The mass rallies are held in many countries in the West Asian region, including Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon, as well as many others across the globe. Senior Iranian officials attended the rally in Tehran, with Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf addressing the event.

Israel bombs Beirut suburbs despite ceasefire

BEIRUT: Israel has launched a large airstrike on the southern suburbs of the Lebanese capital, Beirut, the first heavy bombardment there since a ceasefire agreement ended a war between the occupying regime and the Hezbollah resistance movement in November. Israeli aircraft "destroyed a residential building in Hadath neighborhood" on Friday, an al-Manar reporter said. The attack was preceded by smaller targeted drone strikes that were described by Reuters as "warning shots." Israel claimed that the building was a drone storage facility belonging to Hezbollah, adding that the attack came after two rockets were allegedly fired from Lebanon earlier in the day. In a written statement from Paris, where he met his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun urged the international community to "put an end to these attacks and force Israel to abide by the agreement, just as Lebanon is committed to it." The United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert said the exchange of fire across the border between Lebanon and the occupied territories on Friday was "deeply concerning." - Agencies



Asian Wok
by MONAL

LUNCH BOWLS, THE ASIAN WOK WAY!

DELIGHT IN OUR HEARTY CHICKEN, BEEF, OR SEAFOOD GRAVIES, SERVED WITH YOUR CHOICE OF RICE OR CHOW MEIN AND COMPLIMENTARY MINT MARGARITA AND FISH CRACKERS.

Starting at just Rs. 1195 +tax
Available daily from 12 PM to 6 PM

Lower Ground Floor, Mosaic District, 1-8 Markaz
0300-5845530 | 051-8840526 | 051-8840527